The Magazine for Golden Age, Silver Age, & Bronze Age Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 79
June 2000

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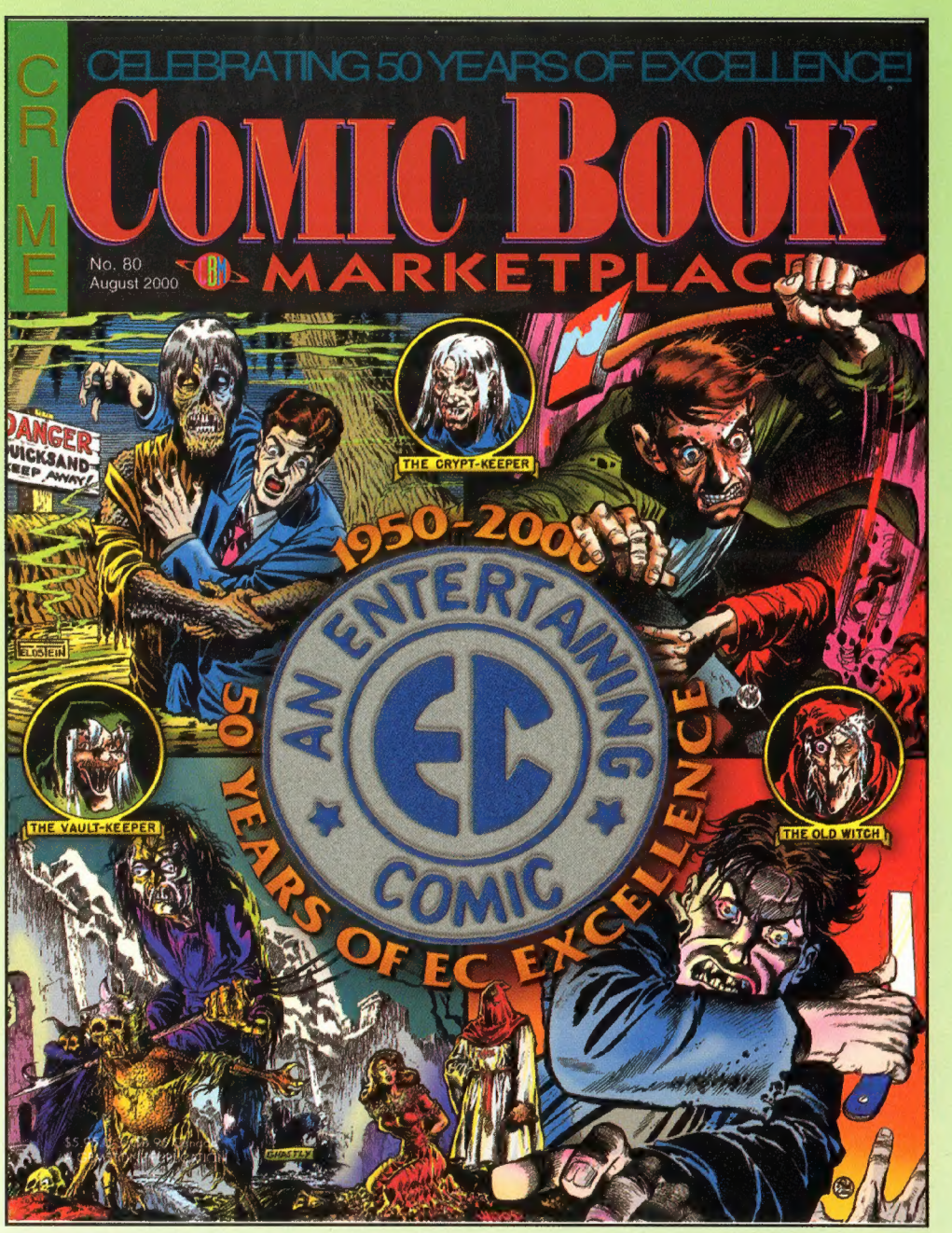

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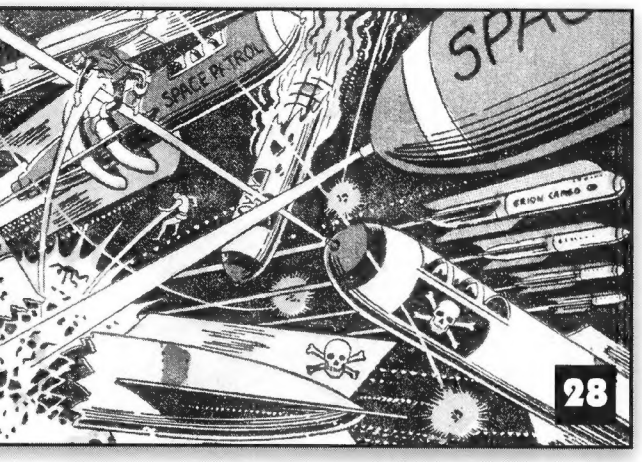

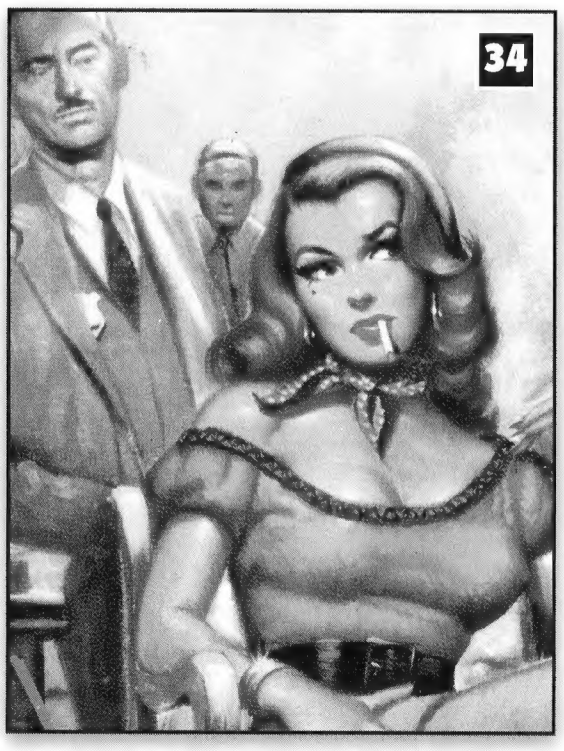

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ON THE COVER:
A closeup of the original art used on the cover of **Mystery Men #8** (Mar 1940)... rendered by the brilliant and legendary Lou Fine.....**20**

The Strange Case of All American Western #12

By the middle 1960s, my brother Lane and I were closing in on completing a number of the more offbeat and obscure DC titles. (In those thrilling days of yesteryear, pretty much any DC title that didn't feature a costumed hero was considered "esoteric.") Right from the start we discovered that asking for DC esoterics was fraught with hazard.

We somehow lived through the embarrassment of asking for DC romance titles when the whole world revolved around superheroes (asking for *Heart Throbs* almost always brought hoots and howls). We survived the mortification of asking for *Nutsy Squirrel* and *Peter Panda* when "real collectors" wanted pre-Code horror (I can't tell you how many times I've been called "that nutsy collector" by snickering and highly amused dealers.) And we gladly bore the insults and the laughter when we'd ask to see DC westerns, then viewed by much of early fandom as uninteresting pap, deserving only of a place in the lowly quarter box.

Yet in spite of all the harangue and ridicule, we persevered, especially with the westerns. We discovered that *All Star* changed into *All Star Western*... and that the title contained some truly wonderful Carmine Infantino and Gil Kane art. We were incredulous to discover that DC's *Hopalong Cassidy* run was continued from the Fawcett numbering and that our copy of *Hoppy* #98 had "93" on the cover. And we were just plain tickled to find out our old friend, Wyoming Kid (a character we discovered hiding in the back of *World's Finest)* was the star of *Western Comics*.

But of all the DC western titles, the one that was most intriguing was *All American Western*... in part perhaps because the *All American* title was already something of an enigma for us.

This pioneering title made so many twists and turns as it evolved that discovering them was as exciting as a roller coaster ride. We pondered M.C. Gaines' weird relationship to DC and the "crude" look of the "pre-hero" issues (#1-15). We liked Gary Concord—The Ultra Man, who started with a bang in issue #8 but faded fast into comic book oblivion.

We cherished our "well read" copy of #16 featuring the debut of one of my favorite characters, Green Lantern. We gasped to discover that oddly, Mutt & Jeff were cover-featured on #79 and 83, a publishing decision that must have been made in desperation as sales figures for the title continued their downward spiral after WWII.

We wondered at the changeover to a western format *before* the word "western" was added to the title/logo (in #100-102), and the crazy way *All American Western* ultimately transitioned yet again into *All American Men Of War.* (To this day, I'm still puzzled by the way #127 (the first war format issue) was not counted in the numbering system of the rest of the war sequence.)

Yet with all the incarnations of M.C. Gaines' flagship title, Lane and I were most fixated on *All American Western*... and the reason was Alex Toth's fabulous art. How we admired his unique and cinematic covers that seem to literal- *(Continued on page 80)*

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Gary M.Carter

ART DIRECTOR
Lisa M.Carter

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Pat S. Calhoun

MARKET REPORT COORDINATOR
Michael Naiman

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Scotty Moore • Phil Barnhart

COPY EDITORS
Lee de Broff • Beth Holley

OFFICE & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Amanda Kitzmiller

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS
Joe McGuckin • Mike Wilbur

MAGAZINE CONSULTANT
Bill Howard

DESIGN CONSULTANTS
Joe Sikoryak • Arnie Sawyer

MARKETING DIRECTOR
J.C. Vaughn

E-MAIL ADDRESS
cbm@gemstonepub.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS AND ARTISTS

Jack Abramowitz • Murphy Anderson
Stephen Barrington • Martin Bartolomeo
Jon Berk• Dave Blanchard • Steven Blasi
Bob Brodsky • Michael Browning • Jim Campos
Gary Colabuono• Steve Cooper • Jack Curtin
Sterling Dashiell • Duane Dimock • John Dinan
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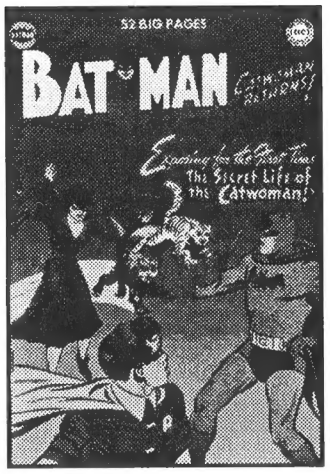

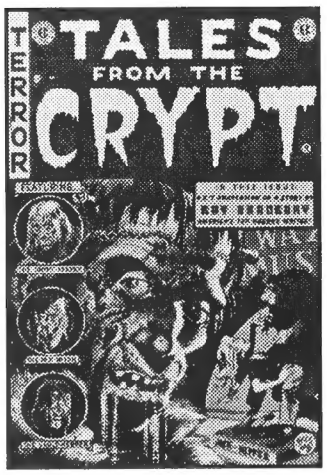

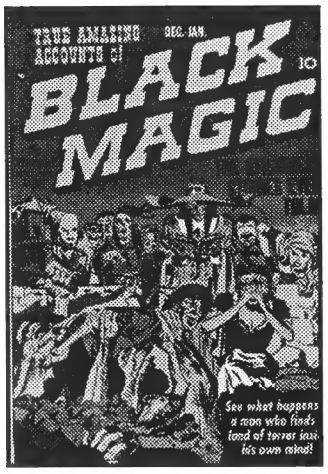

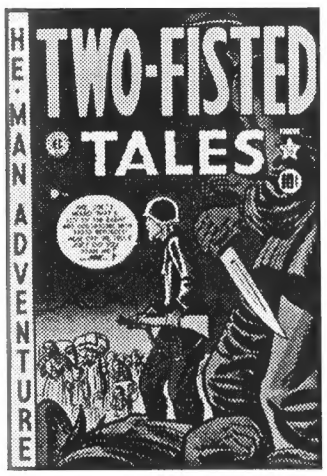

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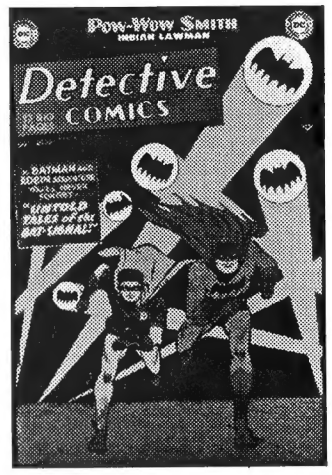

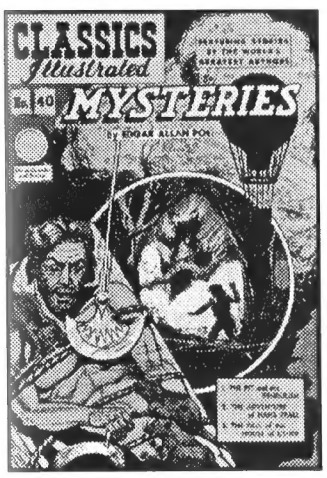

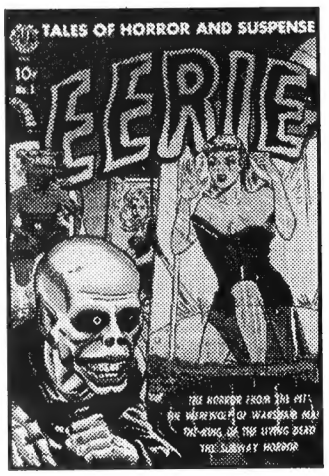

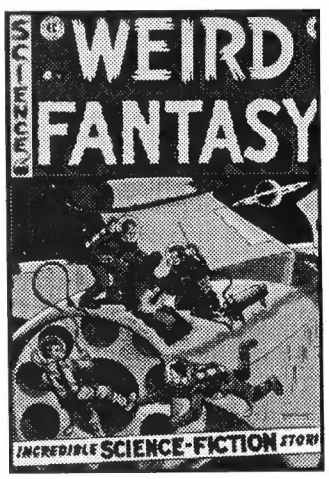

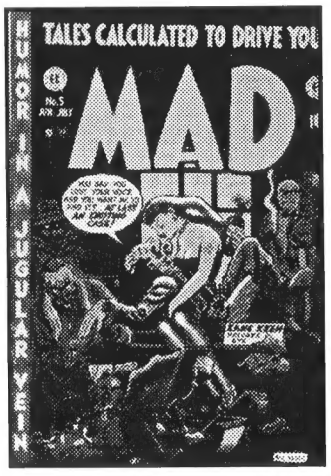

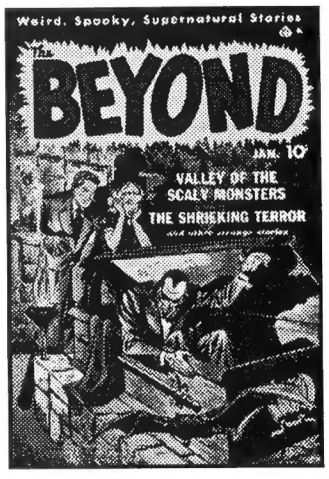

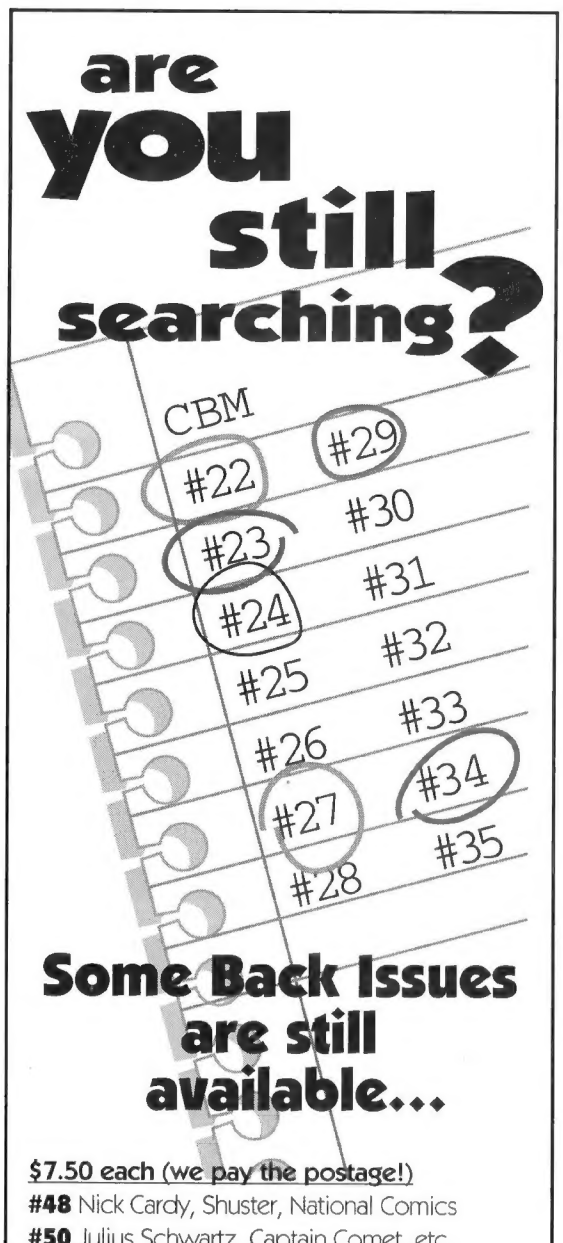

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Who was Fawcette?

Here are some pieces of information asked (and unasked) for in CBM #76. Tony Neves wonders about the artist named Fawcette. This is Gene Fawcette and his career began in the Eisner-Iger shop around 1939. He worked for a number of publishers like Fiction House in the early 1940s, Quality in the mid to late 1940s, and Avon and Pines in the 1950s. He later did "Our New Age," a newspaper panel during the 1970s and 1980, I believe.

On Dan Flagg's question about the comic strip "Dan Flagg." No, you weren't imagining it; there was such a strip that ran from 1963 to 1967. The daily and Sunday was by Don Sherwood, and Al Williamson indeed did some assisting on it, along with Al McWilliams. Williamson also did work for John Prentice on his "Rip Kirby" daily prior to taking over "Secret Agent Corrigan."

In writing about invisible people, Pat Calhoun errs in his starting date of "Invisible Scarlet O'Neil." The daily began in 1940 and the Sunday in 1941. By the way, Russell Stamm had been Chester Gould's assistant on "Dick Tracy" before he began his own feature.

Carl Horak, Alberta, Canada

Thanks for the info, Carl. I'm looking forward to seeing your article on Treasure Chest Comics in print. It's been scheduled and will appear in a upcoming issue!

Letter from down under

How are you guys doing? Hope you and your family are all well. Just writing to let you know that I'm still really enjoying the mag but would hope you would bring back some of the features you had in the pre-#22 issues such as the collector spotlight. Also, I think noteworthy original owner collections such as the Winnipeg, Golden State, and Pacific Coast finds should be given press and some articles on these would be great! (When is that article on the White Mountain collection by Jerry Weist gonna be printed? He's been promising to write it for years!)

I'm going to be making it to San Diego 2000 for my very first proper comic convention… and I'm dragging Keith Contarino with me too! It should be the experience of a lifetime! Looking forward to meeting you in person at this year's Con. Kind regards,

Ben Teoh, Australia

Having been to Australia, I can tell from personal experience that the trek across the Pacific is a long one… but just like I found the trip "down under" to be wonderful, I think you'll find the trip "up over" great too! And you're right… the San Diego Con is the experience of a lifetime!

Atlas-Seaboard correction

CBM #77 was another great issue of my favorite publication, as they all are. A minor correction, however, regarding J.C. Vaughn's article on the Atlas-Seaboard comics. I recently sold a Vicki #1 (at Guide, hi Ed!), and it was also a squarebound. I've not seen issue #2, but the article had mentioned that it was the only squarebound of the lot. Sorry, not so. I have most every issue Atlas put out, including the magazines, but not Fright #1. I think it ranks with the Vicki issues in scarcity; they don't turn up very often. As an avid collector of most everything during the '70s, I was glad to see these cool books get their turn in the CBM spotlight.

Mark Zylberfuden, Texas

You're right Mark… both issues #1 and 2 are squarebound (that was my added notation). What I meant to say was that Vicki #1 was the only Atlas book with a price higher than 25¢.

B&W 75¢ mini comics

Glad you have finally decided to include Bronze Age books as a source of articles, because I am interested in finding out more information about other non Marvel, DC Comics such as: Oracle, Power Comics, Paragon Publications, Byron Press, Modern Comics. Also, underground books from this period. Not only information on the books themselves, but prices.

There was also a publisher and I do not know the publisher or actually have any of the books I bought. The company folded about the time I found out about it, but they were black and white mini comics with a price of 75¢.

The only way to get these books was through the mail. I know that Bill Black's Fun Comics had a Paragon Publisher emblem, but I heard about someone publishing Paragon Books before this and I do believe they existed but have never seen one but I had bought a collectors card that had some of the AC comics female superheroes on them.

But this was way earlier. Maybe some other CBM readers have information on some of the above. Now I know I have Jason Monarch from Oracle. I have power comics and (Cobalt Blue) which is not listed. And I have Voltron from Modern. Are there any other books published by these publishers? And are there any other companies that published books during the '70s?

David Waldron, Tennessee

Range Busters & Western Killers

Would like to reply to Scott Milliken's question concerning Range Busters and Western Killers. The issue of Western Killers he described is one of a series of reprints by M.S. Dist. published around 1952. I have both books. This is one of several comics reprinted by M.S. Dist. The ones I have are:

Inside Crime no #, no indicia (this is neither a reprint of Inside Crime #3 nor #2, however the cover is from Inside Crime #2); Western Killers no #, no indicia (reprints Range Busters #1, Sept. 1950, cover from Western Killers #63); Women Outlaws no #, no indicia (reprints Cody of the Pony Express #1, Sept. 1950, cover from Women Outlaws #7); Famous Crimes #5 (reprints Famous Crimes #3, Sept. 1950); Western Thrillers #52 (cover from Western Thrillers #6); My Love Secret #53 (reprints My Secret Love #25, August 1949); and Crimes By Women #54.

They all have the same inner front cover ad for the kelpidine Chewing Gum reducing plan, last page ad for comics from F & J Trading Company, inner back cover ad for Liquid Liptone, and a back cover ad for 400 Movie & TV star pictures for $1.00.

Hope that helps. Best,

Willie Williams, via E-mail

Comics on CD ROM

Congratulations on your 75th CBM. But I feel the party is a bit premature. Shouldn't you celebrate when your magazine reaches #100? (That's what most magazines do.) The blue cover by Bill Sienkiewicz was delightful. It reminded me of the contemporary philosopher Alan Watts, and his hallucinatory experiences whilst under the influence of LSD. This cover was easily the best I have seen for CBM. (I wouldn't mind having the original work in my house—say the lounge room.) I found it quite annoying that such a great cover was immediately followed by an ad. Couldn't we have had your editorial and then the Carmine Infantino interview? (Surely there is space enough later for ads.)

Reading through the Marketplace Mail, I found the letter by John Mlachnik about The Heap fascinating. I thought DC's Swamp Thing was original. Now I know how wrong I was. And the letter made me think about how many characters in the comics medium are truly original—very few indeed.

The ads in your magazine don't usually catch my attention. But the comics on CD ROM ad did this time. I think its a good idea. Now I don't have to be rich/well off to enjoy some old/rare comics. I trust the company putting out the CDs will continue to expand their range.

The Carmine Infantino interview was good, but still far too short for my liking. (Seeing that this issue was double size, I was expecting considerable dialogue.) I have enjoyed Carmine's art for its gracefulness and unassuming style. However, I feel that his bad guys don't reek enough evil. Perhaps Carmine can prove me wrong by drawing the Red Skull or Victor von Doom. (I wonder what the other readers of CBM think of this.)

Carmine made some interesting comments in the meeting. One was that he didn't like the Batman and that the character would have been washed up if not for the TV show (I didn't like the TV show, and some episodes insulted your intelligence.) Another was that comics don't have a future in the format that we are presently accustomed to. A third was that comic book writers should get more recognition (including perhaps an award). I strongly agree with this.

The Space Museum article was interesting. I didn't know of the Museum's existence. I will definitely have to check out the issues you featured.

After the interview, the best article in this issue was the Esoteric Oddities (i.e. comic books limited to one or two issues). The figure on the cover of KO Komics reminded me of Batman. The two covers for Cannonball Comics were dynamic, and the Crash Kid reminded me of Bucky (Captain America's sidekick) fighting evil. The plot that the Crash Kid could not obtain a license

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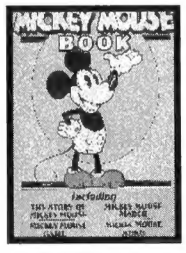

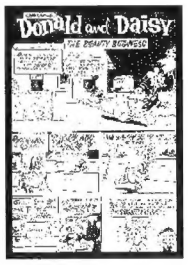

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was funny.

The article concerning the In-The-Wall Collection was interesting. Is this a unique storage method? (I suppose it can be applied to thicker magazines and paperbacks.) The Collection has got me thinking. Was the wall made of brick? If so, then it was fortunate there were no problems with regards to salt/water dampness. Otherwise, a fair portion of the comics would have been soiled.

The Market Reports were, as usual, entertaining. They appeal to your business mind. Sometimes I think I'm reading about the stock market. (However, I don't think the value of comics will crash in cycles like shares. The problem with comics is their maintenance and storage.) I found Joel Thingvall's comments regarding a pecking order for original comic book pages educational.

So #75 was big. Does that mean #100 will be even bigger? I hope so. I also hope that you can reduce the advertising pages a little. An extra article or two would be great. (I know that advertising income is important. But income from CBM readers is even more important.) Until next time,

Kon Calembakis, Australia

Qualified MINT 100?

I agree with you wholeheartedly about what's going with grading in general. Even though I think the split grade debate is a matter of semantics, I never would want a 90 or above numerical grade attached to a grade of VF/NM. 90 should be reserved for NM. In fact, I don't think a NM- should be a 90 either.

This nonsense about "Qualified" grades makes me regurgitate and laugh at the same time. Reminds me of something I used to do in the old days at shows. I usually had three or more tables and I would take the upper part of one rack and put up this absolutely trashed FF #14 that was literally ripped in half and put back together with masking tape. It had coffee stains and chicken grease on it too. I hung a sign on it that read "NEW YORK MINT." Whenever anyone remarked about the obvious defects, I'd reply "Yeah, but other than that it's Mint." My favorite example to date was the Hulk #181 missing a freaking page! Some idiot had bid over $230 on it because it was a QUALIFIED VF/NM. I e-mailed the seller and the bidder to tell them what idiots they both were. I think I'll put all my eBay books up with the listing NM/MT 99 but....

In reality, ALL comics are Qualified MINT 100 because that's the grade they'd have if it weren't for the pesky defects. It's silly but apparently a lot of buyers are buying in. I e-mail them from time to time as part of what I see as my duty to poke fun at this. The last one was a guy who had bid over $13,000 on a RESTORED ASM #1 that was a QUALIFIED VF/NM or NM-. I asked him why he would do that and he said he was bidding for someone else. The funniest thing is, the reserve was even HIGHER. Crazy world huh? Anyhoo... better meander... say hey to the CBM gang for me...

J. Keith Contarino, Georgia

Whitman mystery

I'm writing to find out about Whitman variant DCs. Since I know your readers are experts, I figured I'd come to CBM first.

I recently picked up a lot of Whitman Variants. Most are Legion of Superheroes and Batman titles. Most have different Whitman markings. Either the DC logo is blacked out with the Whitman logo inside, or the logo is under the price. On one book, the price is whited out. On others, the UPC box has a slash across it, is blank or has Superman flying.

I also recently picked up a Whitman oddity. It's a Famous First Edition C-61 with the colorful logo. The curious thing about the book is that it has the Whitman logo where the DC logo should be. Can any CBM reader tell me about these and let me know just how rare they are? I believe the regular comics were bagged and sold in threes, but I don't know about the larger Famous First edition. It's a DC... er Whitman... mystery!

Mike Browning, West Virginia

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Atlas Artists

Regarding the identification of the cover artists (CBM #77) on those Atlas-Seaboard titles that were unconfirmed, I can hazard a pretty good guess on most of them:

Barbarians #1 - Rich Buckler; Couger #1 - Frank Thorne; Destructor #3 - Steve Ditko (p) and Frank Giacoia (i); Destructor #4 - Larry Lieber (p) and Frank Giacoia (i); Ironjaw #1 & 2 - NEAL ADAMS!; Moorlock 01 #3 - Rich Buckler; Phoenix #1 & 2 - Sal Amendola (p) and Dick Giordano (i); Phoenix #3 - Frank Thorne; Police Action #3 - Frank Thorne; Targitt #1 - Dick Giordano; Targitt #2 - Frank Thorne; Targitt #3 - Rich Buckler; Tiger-man #2 - Ernie Colon; Weird Suspense #1 - Dick Giordano; Western Action #1 - Larry Lieber; Wulf #1 & 2 - Larry Hama; Wulf #3 & 4 - Jim Craig.

I'm pretty certain that my selections above are correct. Of those that I wasn't as confident about, I omitted. Hope this helps! I'd certainly be interested in learning the answer myself. Regards,

Michael Kure, via E-mail

Qualified with page missing?

Love your magazine and just renewed my subscription. Recent comments about the "qualified" VF Hulk #181 with a page missing led me to the following questions...

What is the effect to grading of a missing page? What about a non-story ad page? Clipped coupon which doesn't affect a story? How about loose pages?

I recently purchased a nice lot of Silver Age Atoms and discovered that they all had loose centerfolds. I took them back and got a refund but the seller grumbled that, in his opinion, that defect didn't lower the grade. What do you and the experts say?

Billy Harris, Colorado

All the experts I've consulted agree... all of the conditional situations you name (including a loose centerfold) are defects, and therefore lower the grade.

Yoram Forum

The new Overstreet recently came out and I've had the chance to scrutinize it from cover to cover. My conclusion: I believe the prices in this year's Guide are by far the most inaccurate and unrealistic to date. The Overstreet is becoming more of a reference index than a price guide. What's your take on it?

On another note, I've just picked up CBM #24, the issue containing the Spider-Man demand and scarcity indices, and I think perhaps it's time to poll your dealer connections once again. I believe it's common knowledge that ASM #28 is hands down the toughest issue in the run to find in NM condition (although a small case can be made for ASM #11). Now, the Overstreet Guide claims its prices listed (I'm paraphrasing here) 'to be an accurate reflection of the market via documented sales.' Really? From my own experience in trying to obtain a NM copy, in addition to what I have seen and heard from other Spidey collectors and dealers, the $360 listed value of the book is drastically low and represents an inaccurate reflection of its true value. Anyone have a NM copy they want to sell to me for $360? How about $500? I didn't think so.

I have now seen this book sell in excess of $1,100 four times in the past three months. If you ask some of the major dealers, they will attest to the fact that they have buyers lined up at 2-3x Guide for a NM copy. How hard is this book to find in NM? Well, recently I bid over $800 on a NM/M copy listed on eBay, only to be outbid several times. The book finally sold for an astonishing $1,599.02! (eBay item #250821446, in case anyone is interested in viewing the book.)

As for myself, I do not have a NM copy, but it's certainly not for lack of trying... I have been searching for one for years now (it has become my Holy Grail). I have contacted many major dealers/Senior Overstreet advisors, offering them double Guide for this book only to be met with rejection because they have been offered a higher multiple of Guide.

I am very curious to see what value Overstreet will place on Amazing Spider-Man #28 in this year's Guide (#30). I believe anything less than $700 would be a far cry from its true (documented sales) value. Please note: This is not an attack on Overstreet or the Price Guide, but I just think that it should be as accurate as possible, particularly in the case of Amazing Spider-Man as it is one of the most collected titles.

So, if any CBM readers have a NM ASM #28 for sale (or #11 for that matter), please let me know for a serious offer.

Best regards,

Yoram Matzkin, via E-mail

After reading the new Guide cover to cover (twice) and checking dozens of my secret "indicator books" four or five times, I came to a different conclusion. Although there were a few listings here and there I differed with, the vast, vast majority of the listings were on target and rang true for me. As a former editor of the volume (once upon a time) I think it's essential to remember the all-important rule that seasoned collectors always apply to the OPG... "it's a guide."

And on your other note, ASM #28 is presently listed at $370 in NM.

From the desk of Michelle Nolan

Absolutely loved Steve Cooper's article on collecting comic books dated April 1956, especially since that was the year I also started collecting comics. I bought my first comic in April 1956, but it was dated June/July... Mystery In Space #32. You might recall I wrote a column three or four years ago about all the worthwhile comics published in 1956.

I would like to thank Steve for contributing a really "fun" article to CBM, and to congratulate him for a wonderful collecting achievement. However, much as I hate to play the role of party pooper, I've got some bad news for him. There are actually a lot closer to 300 comic books in the April 1956 category than the 220 comics he refers to in his article and his list.

But first, a little background:

Just for fun—and because I collect so many comics from that year in my other specialized collections, such as DCs and romance comics—I am slowly collecting all comics dated 1956 when I find them priced right for me. So does a friend, Dan Stevenson, the Southern California year-by-year indexer supreme and huge 1956 fan. And the king of Atlas collectors, Jim Vadeboncoeur, also has a mammoth 1956 accumulation including every Atlas except maybe a few humor books. I have more than 900 comics from 1956, Dan has nearly 1,600 of the 2,054 comics published that year, and Jim must have well over 1,000. Among the three of us, we are more than 98 percent compete for '56.

There are many more comics dated April 1956 than Steve lists, and yet even a few dozen more than that if you consider all the Atlas and Charlton bi-monthly issues listed as just March or May. Below is a list *(Continued on page 76)*

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Detective Comics		#178	VG+	$100.00	Gene Autry		#48	VG+	$20.00
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Bonanza		#18	G	$10.00	Gene Autry		#91	FN+	$20.00
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Great short runs of the Fifties

By Pat S. Calhoun

The early 1950s were the top years in comic sales, and this great demand resulted in a lot of excellent books. There was so much good stuff available that sometimes superb new titles that deserved success would come and go before they had a chance to catch on. The following is a brief tribute to four such series that shouldn't have died young.

Love Mystery #1 (June 1950) from Fawcett was a genre-blender that combined the best elements of crime and romance. From the crime end came gritty realism, a dark attitude, and sustained suspense… and romance gave the tales a character-driven focus that when merged produced novelettes of power and depth. There were two 15-pagers per issue, stories long enough to develop both the plot and the people involved.

The gag on the cover of Jetta, Teen-Age Sweetheart of the 21st Century #6 (Feb 1953) isn't used in any of the stories, but it's certainly indicative of what's inside… and DeCarlo's Jetta demonstrates his mastery of cartoon cuties.

"The Case of the Winking Buddha" starts off promisingly: an office worker arrives to find turmoil following her boss' death in a train accident, and she stumbles into intrigue when she knocks over his telephone and a claim check falls out of the bottom. She redeems the check for a little jade Buddha, not knowing that the dead man's secret is inside and that several of his associates will stop at nothing to get it.

The company hires a detective to investigate the case, wanting to find the figurine, and he and Alicia are drawn to each other, but she's afraid that he's playing her to get the Buddha. It works pretty well, with only a slight dip near the end when the dick escapes a trap with an unbelievable trick.

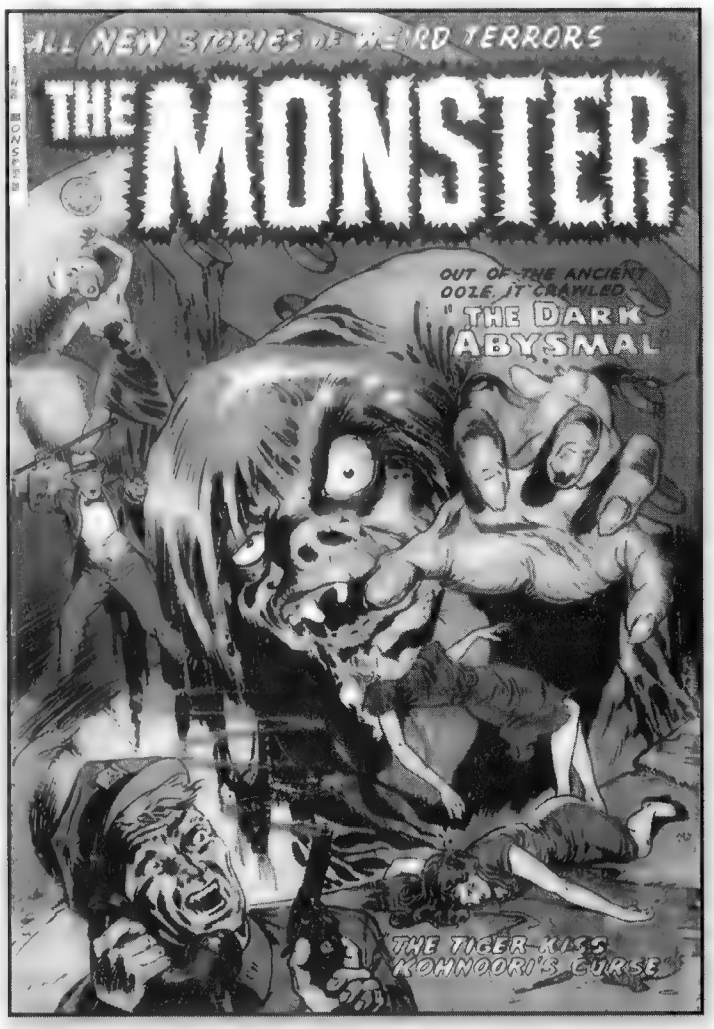
"Terror at Tarn House" is a masterpiece. A rich businessman who has just discovered a 100 grand shortfall in his company accounts is out hunting with a young accountant in the firm when the owner trips and shoots himself dead. The other board members—who are the embezzlers—pin a frame on the accountant, and as he pines on Death Row his wife struggles on his behalf. This one boasts not only a perfectly-engineered "escape" but she also contrives a clever and believable way to get rescued after the board members have her trapped on the day of the execution. Wow!

"Tarn" features art by the able Bob McCarty, and "Buddha" was drawn by old pro Shelly Moldoff.

Jetta, Teen-Age Sweetheart of the 21st Century #6 (February 1953) is the second of three issues of a title that in a better world would still be sparking the racks each month. Publisher Standard believed that low-number issues made a title sound unproven so they began all theirs with #5. This is such a seamless and inevitable blend of SF and teen humor, with charming and classic art by Don DeCarlo—how could it fail?

The first yarn has Jetta's Neutron High science class on a field trip to a "meteor" that turns out to be quite a little world, one onto which the Earth people venture without protective garb. Miss Gorgon sends the students to find samples of the rare yiffel plant, but instead they discover what seems to be a new species of animal that they "bag"—hoping to impress the teacher. But this turns around when the animal is unmasked as an important faculty member. It's a riot.

In the second story Jetta and girlfriend/rival Hilaria learn the dangers of interplanetary romance in five funny pages. Then comes a zany back-up feature as Zoomer and Atomica time travel back to the 20th Century. The third Jetta tale wraps things up as Arky and Biff are set to let whichever of them scores the most points in that night's space football game be the one to take her to the prom. Biff futzes with Arky's rocket pack, and when the game starts the hapless teen shoots off into the stratosphere and crash lands on a

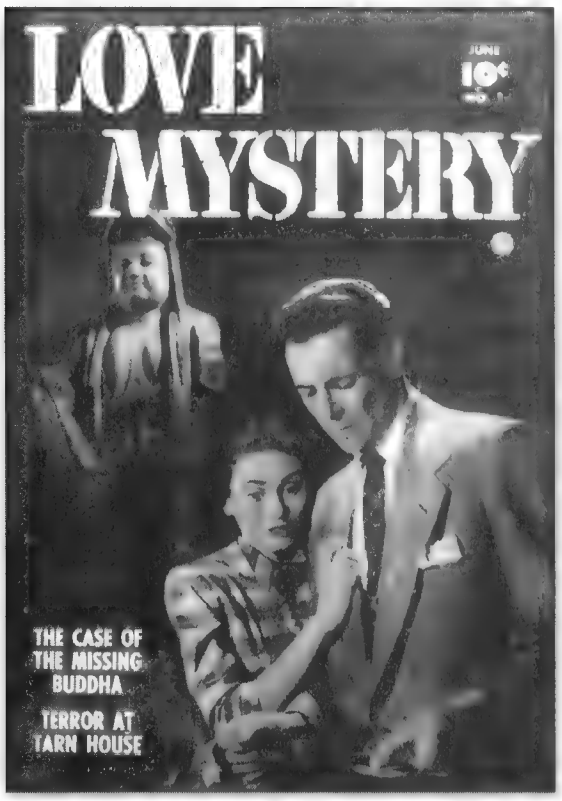

ALL NEW STORIES OF WEIRD TERRORS
THE MONSTER
OUT OF THE ANCIENT OOZE IT CRAWLED...
"THE DARK ABYSMAL
THE TIGER-KISS KOHNOOR'S CURSE

PREVIOUS PAGE: Maurice Whitman drew most of the Fiction House covers for their last couple of years in the comics business; the eerie cover on Monster #2 (1953) makes it pretty clear that it's a horror title....

space station. But the attendant is an old Neutron grad, and he fixes the rocket pack and fills Arky with super fuel. He gets back in time to win the game by scoring 176 points in the final two minutes! But then at the prom he starts to have some strange reactions to the fuel....

Fiction House's *Monster* #2 (1953) was the last issue of this title, and it's fantastic! The Maurice Whitman creepo cover is effective and appropriate. Inside, "The Dark Abysmal" is really good, and Johnny Bell's energetic art makes it even better. A little alien crash-lands his spaceship in a country swimmin' hole, and one of the local boys befriends it—knowing only that it's an affectionate animal. When he takes it to town the peoples' fear and greed makes it grow bigger and more belligerent. After darn-near destroying the town the boy makes a valiant attempt to calm it down before the Air Force bombers arrive...

A yarn like that is tough to beat, but the other four stories are all pretty fair. "Tiger Kiss" deals with the black magic of the Indian jungle, where a man can be turned into a ferocious beast. "Where the Undead Roam" offers zombies, engaging art by Bill Benulis and Jack Abel, and a spooky ending. Bill Discount does a stylish job illustrating "Kohnoori's Curse, which is otherwise a standard "treasure hunter raids temple and finds trouble" gig. "The Deadman's Chest" is a basic "greedy grandson hastens inheritance but is brought down by the old man's ghost" plot, but even this tale has a little embroidery on it.



Fawcett used photo covers to good effect on all three issues of Love Mystery (#1, Jun 1950, shown here); a style that they and several other companies also used on many early issues of their romance books.

Fiction House was pulling back from the comic book business, and that may have been another reason *Monster* wasn't continued. They were a big pulp publisher, and the pulps were dying: this was a big factor leading towards the Comics Code/crash of 1955.

John Carter of Mars didn't even have his own title except for three issues of Dell's one-shot series of which *Four Color* #488 (August 1953) is the third. All are adapted straight from Edgar Rice Burroughs' novels: this one is part two of *The Gods of Mars*, which was first published in 1918. The first Dell issue told how Earth-man John Carter was mysteriously teleported to Mars, where he found himself possessed of strength far beyond that of the Martian people. Burroughs first Mars book came out in 1912—the same year he debuted Tarzan..

This one starts with John Carter—who has just rescued his wife Dejah Thoris from impending sacrifice by a fanatic cult—trying to rocket out of an attack by a leader of the Black Pirates who they'd fought in part one (in the previous Dell issue). Carter, Dejah, friend Thuvia, and the four-armed green Thark Tars Tarkas are forced to "paraloon" down when the pirate shoots their ship out of the sky. Thurid abducts the two women, and leaves Carter and Tars Tarkas tied up beneath the tentacles of a carnivorous tree. Fortunately Carter's friend, the huge-mawed Martian dog Woola, shows up just in time to chew them to freedom. The chase eventually leads to a domed city at the north pole where an evil tyrant wants to marry Dejah Thoris but first must prove John Carter dead. This almost comes to pass, but Burroughs contrives a turnaround that's magnificently staged.

Four Color #488 (Aug 1953) is the only one of the three John Carter of Mars issues to feature a painted cover, and it's a simple yet masterful rendition of this quintessential space hero.

In short, it's gorgeous space opera, and the clean contours of Jesse Marsh's art make plenty of graphic music. And Dell's 32-page cover-to cover story is perfect packaging.

Perhaps there are still some patiently naive souls who scan the racks each month looking for *Jetta* #8 or a *John Carter of Mars* #1 that adapts another Burroughs classic with Jesse's art transporting us to the red planet.

Pat Calhoun is a nationally recognized comic book historian. Originally a Coronadan, Pat and his family now reside in Santa Rosa, California.

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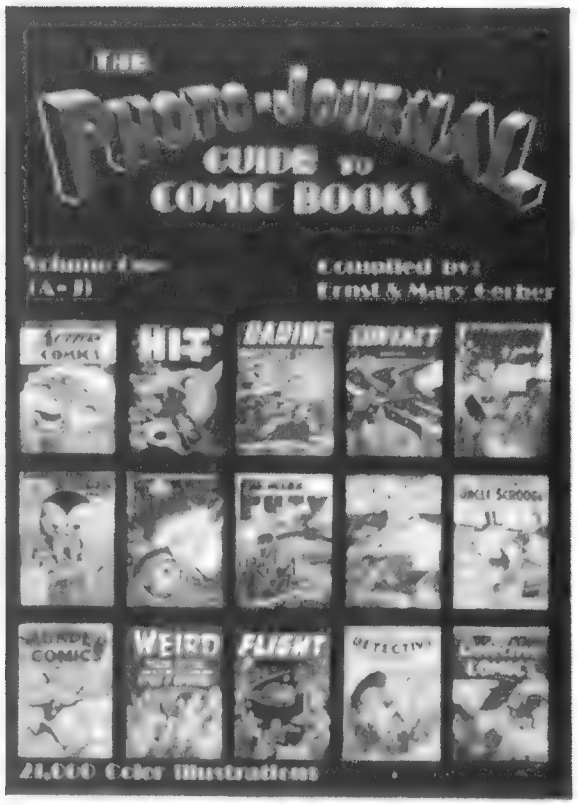

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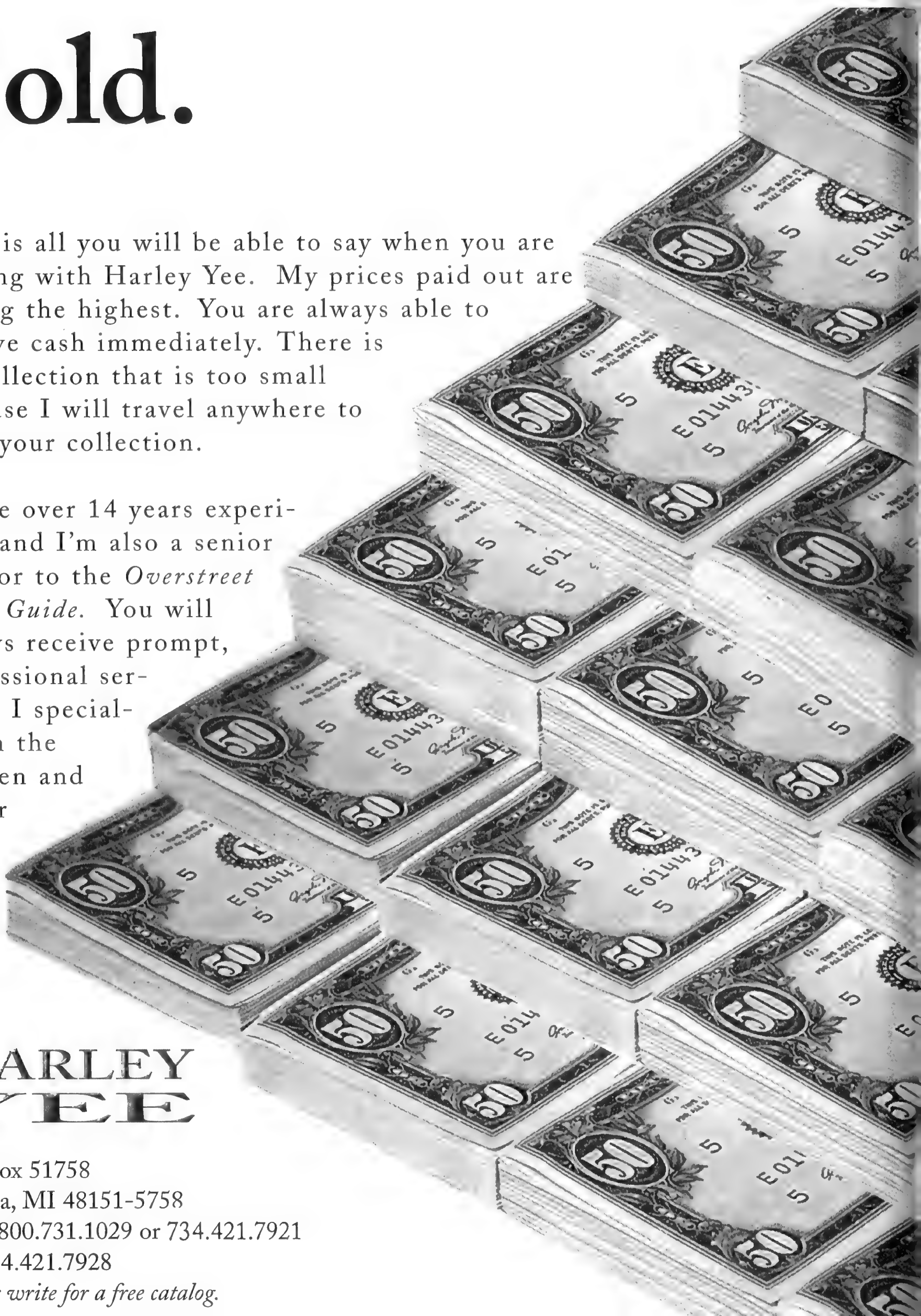

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Character Out of Time

The odd 1950's revival of the Blue Beetle

By Michelle Nolan

The Blue Beetle, boasting one of the quintessential names for a superhero of the 1940s, appeared in only 11 comic books during the 1950s. Even so, the Blue Beetle was the only Golden Age superhero who was revived not once but twice in the 1950s, not to mention several times thereafter.

Depending on how you look at it, the Blue Beetle was the first Golden Age superhero to be revived, the first time during the heart of the Atom Age and the second time shortly before the beginning of the Silver Age.

When the "Love Glut" of romance comics titles affected the infamous Victor Fox's line of comics—just as the romantic overkill swamped most publishers during 1950—the embattled "King of Sleaze" returned to crime comics, among other themes.

One of these short-lived Fox crime titles was the *Blue Beetle*, which resumed publication after a break of nearly two years with #58 (April 1950) and ran three issues through August 1950 (see the *Photo-Journal Guide to Comics* for the covers). However, with the company's issues dated August and September 1950, Fox suspended publishing comics until producing a few last-gasp issues about a year later.

However, the three-issue 1950 *Blue Beetle* revival from Fox featured orthodox superhero covers (well, #59 is a little racier than average), in contrast to the amazingly intense, sleazy, highly sought-after crime covers that ran monthly from *Blue Beetle* #45 (June 1947) through #57 (July 1948), skipping only June 1948. That 13-issue run in itself represented something of a revival, since *Blue Beetle* #44 (September/October 1946) ended the original run.

Think about it—the only title with a superheros' name to run monthly during the period from mid-1947 through mid-1948 was the *Blue Beetle*! Think those sleazy Fox comics didn't sell? Granted, the Blue Beetle appeared only sporadically in other titles and was not cover-featured in them, unlike the monthly appearances of several DC superheroes in anthology titles of the time.

At any rate, I believe the brief 1950 revival of the Blue Beetle was the first reappearance of a discontinued Golden Age superhero. Those three 1950 *Blue Beetle* issues seem scarce—in my opinion, much scarcer than most of the 1940's issues, if not as desirable as some.

The Blue Beetle's final true Golden Age bow not only came in *Blue Beetle* #57, but also in *All-Top Comics* #13 (September 1948), *Zegra* #1 (August 1948) and *Zago* #1 (September 1948).

I wonder what readers must have thought, seeing *Blue Beetle* on the stands in 1950 after being out of circulation for nearly two years. Or did very many readers see these issues? Fox's editors uncharacteristically showed a sense of comic history when "Blue Beetle Returns" was emblazoned on the newspaper-theme cover of #58.

Just four years later, Charlton brought Blue Beetle back in *Space Adventures* #13 (October/November 1954), for which regular Charlton artist Al Fago recreated the cover of the return issue of *Blue Beetle* #58, showing our hero bursting through the front page of a newspaper.

Altogether, Blue Beetle appeared in 11 stories covering seven Charlton comic books—with single 10-page Fox reprint stories in *Space Adventures* #13 and the much scarcer #14 (January 1955) along with two Fox reprints in both *Blue Beetle* #18 (February 1955) and #19 (April 1955). Two new stories of the character appeared in both *Blue Beetle* #20 (June 1955) and #21 (August 1955), plus a final appearance in *Nature Boy* #3 (March 1956)—the first issue of that very odd three-issue superhero title. All the covers were original

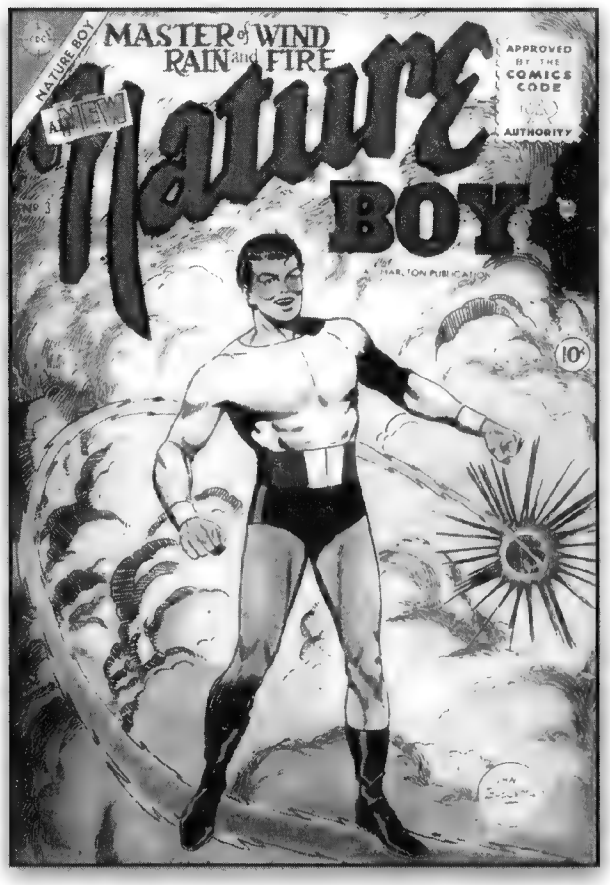
Blue Beetle made a final 1950's appearance in the only IW issue of *Human Fly* #1 published in 1958 (and one of the few IW first issues to carry a #1 instead of a #10 or #11). The bandit reprint publisher presented the oddly titled *Human Fly* comic book with a character clearly drawn to look like the Blue Beetle on the cover. This issue includes one Blue Beetle reprint, complete with Fox corporate logo—a truly terribly drawn 10-page tale entitled "Triple Trouble" from *Blue Beetle* #44. (*Super Comics*, the name IW used for its plethora of reprints in the early 1960s, also

Charlton's Space Adventures #13 (Oct/Nov 1954) showcased the revival of Fox's Golden Age "super" hero, the Blue Beetle

© CHARLTON

reprinted a Blue Beetle story from Fox's #46 in *Human Fly* #10, the strange little company's only other issue of this title.)

The Blue Beetle was part of a once little-known 1950's revival of superheroes that preceded the historic revival of the Flash in *Showcase* #4 (September/October 1956). Most collectors tend to think of the Flash when it comes to Silver Age revivals, yet no fewer than 17 Golden Age superheroes had been revived by the time Barry Allen/Flash came along in 1956! The Flash, of course, was the only successful revival until *Showcase* introduced the Silver Age Green Lantern three years later.



This first issue of Nature Boy (Mar 1956) featured the last Blue Beetle story

The short-lived 1950's superhero revivals (see chart) began with the Phantom in *Harvey Hits* #51 (October 1951) and continued through Red Rocket as a fill-in character in Ajax's *Phantom Lady* #3 (March 1955). In between, we had Fiction House's five-issue run of *The Spirit*, along with Rocketman and Rocketgirl reprints in *Zip-Jet Comics*, Green Hornet in Dell *Four Color* #496, the Atlas versions of Captain America, Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, plus Torpedoman, Black Cobra, Charlton's Blue Beetle, The Flame, Phantom Lady, Black Cat, Stuntman, Wonder Boy, and Samson.

Even though I began buying new comics in 1956 and began to seek out back issues that same year, I had never heard of Blue Beetle until 1964, when Charlton revived the character for a second time.

I clearly remember my first exposure to the character in that April of 1964—I was on one of the early commercial jets winging my way to Italy at the age of 16 with a tour group after winning a contest. I spotted this kid of about 12 reading Charlton's Volume 2, #1 (June 1964) of *Blue Beetle*. I can remember his look of astonishment when I asked him if I could look at it.

"This? You can have it. It's just awful. It's not nearly as good as *Spider-Man*!" the kid responded. I gave him 12¢, but I had to agree. Even at the time, I thought the name of the Blue Beetle was an awful knockoff of the Green Hornet, which I had grown up to love on the radio even though he wasn't in comic books in the 1950s (except in his single Dell *Four-Color* issue).

"He was a great favorite for a far longer time than he deserved," Jules Feiffer wrote of the Blue Beetle in *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (1965). Even then, avidly gobbling up the first edition of that seminal volume 35 years ago, Feiffer was right.

The Blue Beetle's six reprint story appearances in the 1954-55 Charlton issues were wildly out of place for the period. Not only were they poorly drawn, but they creaked with age! Charlton published more than its share of oddities during the 1950s, but seldom anything odder than this. If you ever get the chance to see one of these, you'll be utterly astonished with how it compares to a slick Dell or DC comic of the same era!

It took me a long time to acquire all seven Charlton comics with the Blue Beetle, since at least five of them are scarce. (By the way, with the fortuitous acquisition of Ajax's *The Flame* #2 a couple of years ago from the indefatigable dealer John Hauser, I gleefully completed my collection of short-run 1950's costume and superhero comics. Thanks again, John)

By far the most common Charlton Blue Beetle appearance is *Space Adventures* #13, for which a warehouse find some years back apparently unleashed a flood of issues on the market. It has in my opinion the best cover. (As a life-long newspaper reporter, I love those "bursting through the front page" covers!)

Space Adventures #14 may well be the most uncommon of the bunch. The *Gerber Photo-Journal* gives this one a "6" (50 to 200 copies exist), and I would have to agree.

It's difficult to say which of the four issues of *Blue Beetle* #18-21 (which continued from *The Thing*) are the scarcest. Gerber rates them all "5" except the *Photo-Journal* gives #19 a "6"—and does not picture it. Oddly, though, my guess is that

Blue Beetle in Charlton Comics

(in chronological order)

Space Adventures #13 (Oct/Nov 1954) "Murder in the Ring" 10 pages (Fox reprint)

Space Adventures #14 (Dec 1954/Jan 1955) "Perils of the Blue Beetle" 10 pages (Fox reprint)

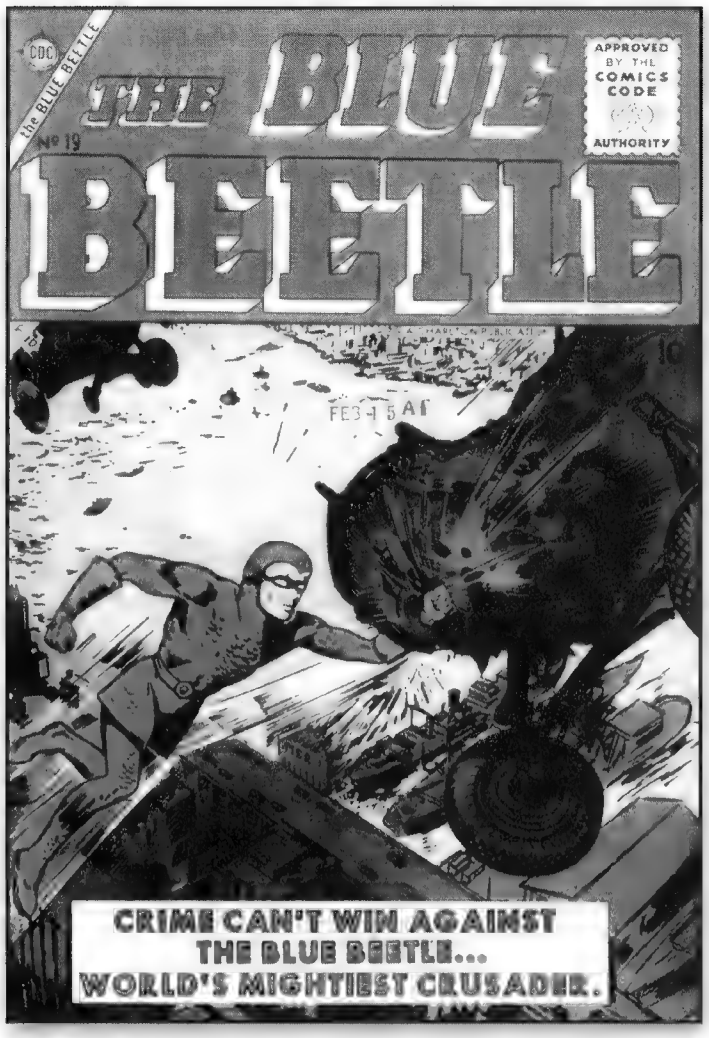
Blue Beetle #18 (Feb 1955) "Masks of Mystery" 10 pages; "The Man Who Stole 24 hours" 10 pages (Fox reprints)

Blue Beetle #19 (Apr 1955) "Mystery of the Tolling Bell" 7 pages; "Anonymous Atom!" 10 pages (Fox reprints)

Blue Beetle #20 (Jun 1955) "Rookie Trouble" 8 pages; "Last Chance" 8 pages (original stories)

Blue Beetle #21 (Aug 1955) "The Unmasking" 8 pages; "Captured" 7 pages (original stories)

Nature Boy #3 (Mar 1956) "Unmasked" 8 pages (original story, not related to similar story in Blue Beetle #21)


THE BLUE BEETLE
No 19
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
CRIME CAN'T WIN AGAINST THE BLUE BEETLE... WORLD'S MIGHTIEST CRUSADER.

The less-than-attractive cover of Blue Beetle #19 (Apr 1955, rare) is not pictured in Gerber

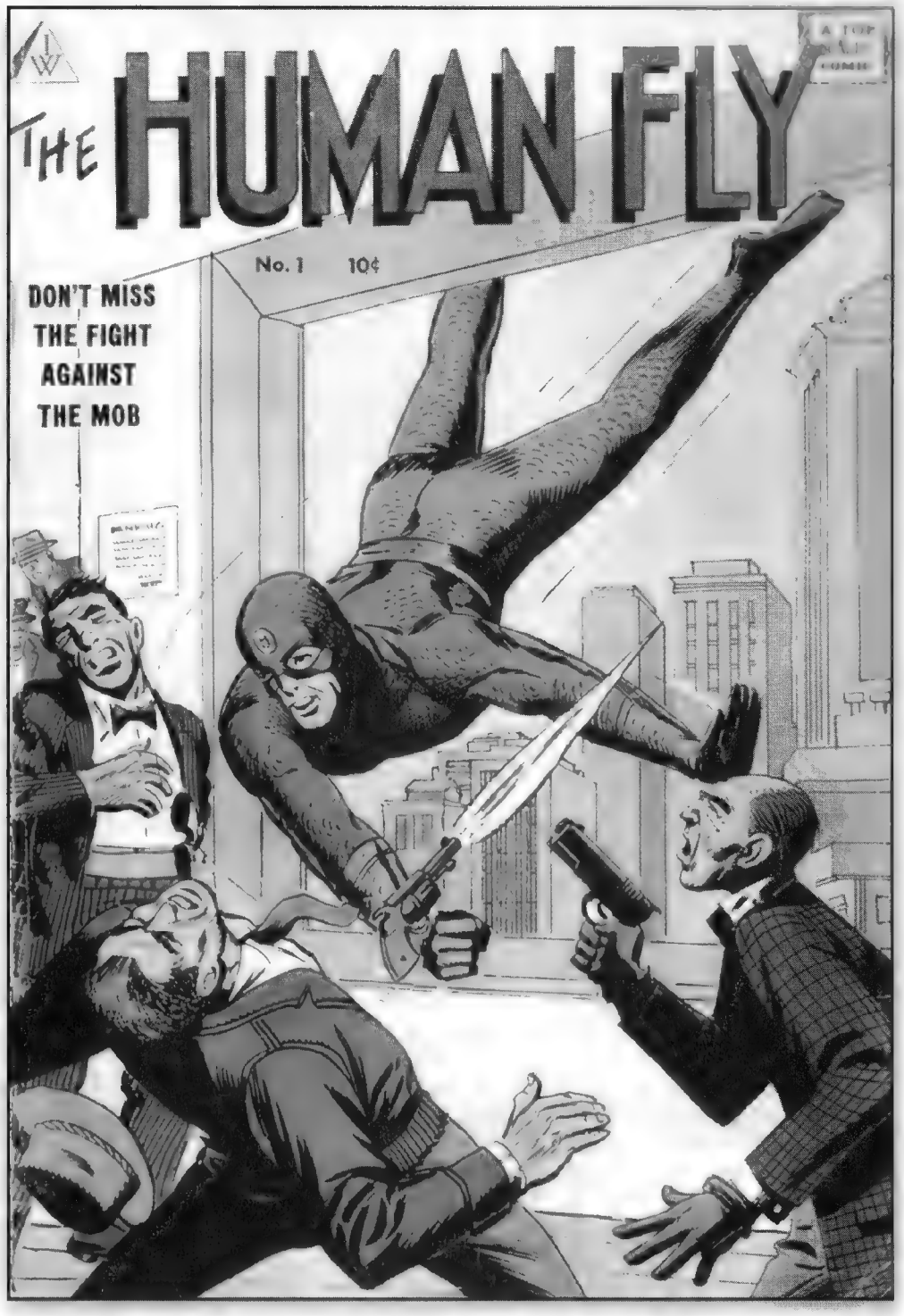
I've seen more copies of #19 than the other three issues, and it was the first of the four that I found.

Nature Boy #3 (March 1956), with the last 1950's Charlton appearance of the brief Blue Beetle revival, is also difficult to find. Gerber gives that one a "6" and rightly so. I never saw the first two issues of *Nature Boy* when they came out, but I do remember buying #5 (February 1957, the third issue) off the stands and just loving the weird concept.

I also could absolutely not figure out how I had missed what I thought had been the first four issues of *Nature Boy*! I spent years and years and years looking for those books, not even realizing the first two didn't even exist (the title continued from the firefighting comic *Danny Blaze* #1-2).

Not counting the DC characters that were published through the 1950s without interruption, that March 1956 appearance of Blue Beetle in *Nature Boy* #3 made the character the second-to-last Golden Age character to appear in comics! The last, of course, was Quality's *Plastic Man* #64 (November 1956). That final issue of *Plastic Man* appeared five months after #63 (July 1956), so #64 was the only one of the original series I bought off the stands. I was ever so disappointed when I never saw another one!

By the way, the *Gerber Photo-Journal* says the Blue Beetle's origin story is the one in *Nature Boy* #3, but that apparently was a misunderstanding taken from the *Overstreet Price Guide*, which clearly separates "Origin" (meaning that of Nature Boy) with "Blue Beetle story" with a semicolon in the notes. What a difference a semicolon can make.



Obscure and rather tough to find... The Human Fly #1 (1958), an IW reprint, contains a Blue Beetle story and features a BB look-alike on the cover

The five original Blue Beetle stories in *Blue Beetle* #20-21 and *Nature Boy* #3 are all workmanlike tales, nothing special but not dated either. However, these five stories—which center on how Blue Beetle's existence complicates the life of his alter ego as rookie policeman Dan Garret (sometimes spelled "Garrett")—are a whole lot better than the six reprint stories Charlton used to reintroduce the character.

I suspect that it might have been easier for Charlton to come up with new stories of the Blue Beetle than to doctor the Fox reprints for the Comics Code. Of course, Charlton may have run out of Fox reprints.

Charlton's editors were none too alert either. *Blue Beetle* #19—the second Charlton issue—carries a Statement of Ownership for *The Thing!* In *Blue Beetle* #21, the blurb at the bottom of the second page of the Joan Mason reprint tells readers that "Blue Beetle is on sale the first week of every month!" You've got to wonder how things like this slipped by—but then, Charlton's staff published a ton of comics

Golden Age Superhero Revivals 1950-1955

(First new appearances in chronological order)

Blue Beetle .....Blue Beetle #58 (Apr 1950, Fox)
Phantom .....Harvey Hits #51 (Oct 1951, Harvey)
The Spirit .....The Spirit #1 (Spring 1952, Fiction House)
Rocketman & Rocketgirl .....Zip-Jet #1 (Feb 1953, St. John)
The Green Hornet .....Four Color #496 (Sep 1953, Dell)
Captain America .....Young Men #24 (Dec 1953, Atlas)
Human Torch .....Young Men #24 (Dec 1953, Atlas)
Sub-Mariner .....Young Men #24 (Dec 1953, Atlas)
Torpedoman .....Ghostly Weird Stories #124 (Sep 1954, Star)
The Flame .....The Flame #5 (Dec 1954-Jan 1955, Ajax-Farrell)
Phantom Lady .....Phantom Lady #5 (Dec 1954-Jan 1955, Ajax-Farrell)
Black Cat .....Black Cat Mystery Western #54 (Feb 1955, Harvey)
Stuntman .....Thrills of Tomorrow #19 (Feb 1955, Harvey)
Wonder Boy .....Terrific Comics #16 (Mar 1955, Ajax-Farrell)
Red Rocket .....Phantom Lady #3 (Apr 1955, Ajax-Farrell)
Samson .....Samson #12 (Apr 1955, Ajax-Farrell)

with hardly any personnel.

Blue Beetle #19 is Charlton's first Code-approved issue yet is the only Code-approved issue with Fox reprints of Blue Beetle (the last two did contain old Joan Mason reprints from Fox, detailing the adventures of the Blue Beetle's reporter girlfriend). One of the two Blue Beetle stories in #19, entitled "Anonymous Atom!", contains some typically tough Fox language plus a bondage/torture panel. I can't figure out how that got past the Comics Code, though I don't have the original version so I can't compare them.

Charlton's editors did have a sense of comic history, for they bannered "Extra!! The Blue Beetle Returns!!!" across the top of the covers of both *Space Adventures* #13 and 14. When *The Thing* was converted to Blue Beetle, *Space Adventures* featured the television hero Rocky Jones, Space Ranger (one of my childhood favorites) in #15-18.

If you're looking for excellence, Charlton's 1950's revival of the Blue Beetle won't appeal to you. If however, you're looking for funky fun along with a little bit of comic book history, you might want to give these issues a look.

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950s comic books in the U.S. and has contributed volumes of data to the Overstreet Price Guide.

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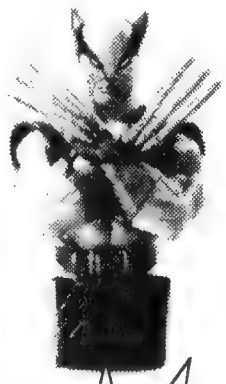

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Victor Fox's Blue Beetle!

by Christopher Irving

In 1939 when he debuted, the Blue Beetle was not only the second superhero to earn his own comic book title (following *Superman*), but was also the star of a multi-media campaign that included both a daily newspaper strip and a radio show! With so much going for Fox's Azure Avenger, some thought the character might have given even Superman a run for his money... and earned more than "second string" status in the history of comics! Alas, the Blue Beetle did not.

Blue Beetle #7 (Jun 1941)

VICTOR FOX... THE KING OF COMICS

Around 1939, British-born Victor Fox, a former accountant for DC Comics decided to strike out on his own and cash in on the comics craze. Despite the 60 years that have passed since then, Fox's reputation still precedes him as having been a true entrepreneur and, apparently, an experienced and less-than-honest businessman.

To produce his comics, Fox hired out work from different studios. The studio that he pursued to produce his *Wonder Comics* #1, (dated May of 1939) was that of a young Jerry Iger and Will Eisner.

"[Fox] decided to start his own publishing company, and called and got in touch with Jerry Iger, my partner, and we began doing work for him on a contract basis," Will Eisner said. "Fox was the kind of fellow who told you and had a firm idea of what he wanted. He had some notes that I kept, fortunately, in which he told me he wanted a character that specifically wore a cape and had tights. When I got the description, I remember thinking it was awfully close to Superman."

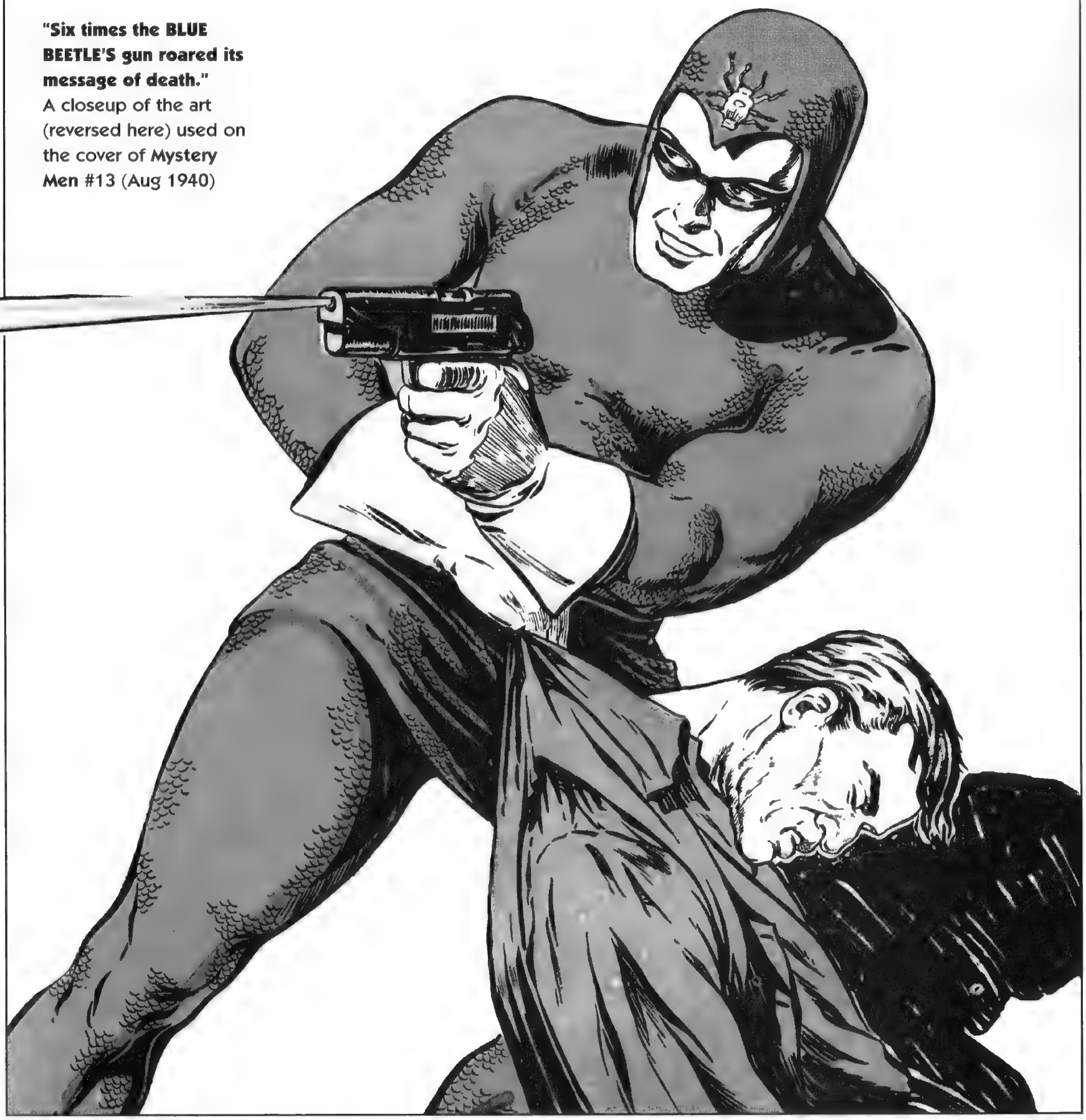
The character that erupted out of Eisner's hesitant imagination was Wonderman, an obvious knock-off of Donenfeld's own Man of Steel.

"We produced it for him, and then he was sued by the Superman people. I recall, at that time, that he owed us quite a bit of money. We were in a terrible bind because he refused to pay the money unless I testified in court that it was my idea, and that he had nothing to do with it and just didn't know."

Eisner, despite partner Jerry Iger's insistence on going ahead with Fox, refused to testify against himself in court, and Victor Fox was sued. (Oddly enough, Hugo Gernsback, the founder of the *Amazing Stories* and *Wonder* pulps, caught wind of the title, and Fox was forced to changed it to *Wonder World Comics* shortly after.) Eisner and Iger, of course, lost the money owed them by Fox. Between six months and a year after beginning work for Victor Fox, the Eisner-Iger shop was no longer producing work for the Fox Company. The studio had produced enough cover material to last Fox through August of 1941.

(Interestingly, Fox was apparently headquartered in the same building as National Comics. One story has it that he would spit out of the elevator when it would stop at National's floor.)

Another professional who paints a less than charming picture of Victor Fox is celebrated comic creator Joe Simon, who served as an editor for a brief stint at Fox Comics, replacing the departing Eisner and Iger. In *The Comic Book Makers*, written by Joe and his son, Jim Simon, Joe offers up his first hand experience of working for Fox. Simon describes Fox as "[A] short, round, nattily dressed man in his late forties, with a rasping voice that would shrill to frightening crescendos when he was excited."



"Six times the BLUE BEETLE'S gun roared its message of death." A closeup of the art (reversed here) used on the cover of Mystery Men #13 (Aug 1940)

For $85 a week, Simon worked as an editor at Fox Comics, for the man who was the self-proclaimed "King of Comics." As fate would have it, working for Fox introduced Simon to his future creative partner, a true King of Comics: Jack Kirby.

In 1940, Victor Fox had tried to cash in on the popularity of Coca-Cola with his very own Kooba Cola. Advertised as "a cola drink with Vitamin B1," Kooba never picked up. Not even having artists constantly draw bottles of Kooba throughout the Fox Comics caused the soda that was "Enough for two" to sell. Nor could Kooba's short-lived mascot, "The Kooba Kid," a boy who drank a bottle of Kooba to gain huge muscles and save the day, could salvage this vitamin-packed disaster.

Blackhawk artist Chuck Cuidera, who started at Fox, recalls the character of Victor Fox and his get-rich-quick schemes.

"Fox was quite a character, he was one of the accountants for Donenfeld and Liebowitz who owned DC, and they were bitter enemies. They were on the sixth floor, and we were on the twelfth floor in 480 Lexington Ave., which was the old Grand

Who created the Blue Beetle?

An origin still shrouded in clouds of mystery!

by Chris Irving

It was not uncommon in the Golden Age of Comics, especially in a shop setting like Eisner-Iger, for artists and writers of a feature to go uncredited. When Victor Fox was initially buying work from Eisner-Iger, different artists (in order to give the impression of a strip having the same writer) would all sign a strip with the same pseudonym. Eisner-Iger produced many, if not all, of Fox's early comic books, ranging from Lou Fine's "The Flame" to George Tuska's "Zanzibar." Among with those early stories was The Blue Beetle, including his introduction (published in *Mystery Men*) and at least the first couple of stories destined for his ongoing series. It was possible for many artists to work on a book, unaware that others worked on it as well. This caused many to believe themselves to be the sole artist. It was rare for artists to even have time to purchase the comics they drew, and unless they worked in a "sweat shop" setting, they rarely worked side by side. Some historians have suggested that keeping them from meeting and talking to other artists was done so they couldn't compare page rates or develop labor organizations, all in the hopes this would preclude anyone from making demands for additional money.

Because of this, the creator behind The Blue Beetle has remained a mystery. The first, and every consequent, story was signed "Charles Nicholas." In the past few years, however, the matter of Nicholas's identity has been a bit of a controversy.

The first artist to lay claim to the Charles Nicholas name was Charles Wotjtkowski, who used the pen name while working under the Eisner-Iger shop. A Polish artist, Wotjkowski claimed that the inspiration behind The Blue Beetle was the Green Hornet, a claim that makes sense when one looks at the initial Blue Beetle story, when the character is shown donning a pair of goggles and a blue suit.

Wotjkowski later went on to work for Simon and Kirby, and then found himself at Charlton Comics during the late '50's, and eventually did work for Marvel comics in the 1970s, before his death in the mid-1980s.

"Charlie Nicholas came up to work at Charlton when I went up there," former Charlton editor Dick Giordano recalled. "I met him there for the first time, he was on staff as an artist.

"Later on, when I came back as executive editor, Charlie was still there. When we did The Blue Beetle, Charlie just came up and said 'I created that character!' (He always had a cigarette in his mouth, with an ash about as long as the amount of cigarette he had, and he could talk without that ash falling off. A real character who didn't talk very clearly because he had a cigarette in his mouth)... and that was it, that was the total sum of our conversation about that. He did it for Victor Fox, who had a habit of not paying people.

"I think The Blue Beetle name was a take-off of The Green Hornet... Nicholas didn't have a story behind that character's creation. I got the impression, and I can't tell you why, that there was a writer involved as well. I don't think Nicholas wrote the first issue, just drew it."

Recently, *Blackhawk* and Quality Comics artist Charles Nicholas Cuidera laid claim to parenting the character. (*Continued on page 25*)

Central Station," Cuidera said. "[Fox] was a wheeler and dealer, you know. At the time I worked there, he put out something to compete with Coca-Cola, and it was called Kooba. What made it real bad was like when he would compete with Esquire with a men's magazine."

Fox's biggest get rich-quick-scheme, in his search for Fox Comics' own Superman, was perhaps the closest he ever came to succeeding.

CALLING ALL MYSTERY MEN...

With the quick demise of Wonderman, Victor Fox was scrambling to find a suitable replacement to give Superman competition. *Mystery Men Comics* #1, a superhero anthology, was launched around August, 1939. The cover featured Fox's new Wonderchild, The Green Mask, saving the day. The Green Mask was not very impressive, however, and never managed to pick up much of an audience. By *Mystery Men* #7, The Green Mask was usurped on the cover by another new kid on the block: The Blue Beetle.

From his debut in *Mystery Men* #1, The Blue Beetle was a slightly different creature than even three issues later. The modest four-page introduction tale, signed by "Charles Nicholas," didn't showcase the chain-armored Phantom-esque character that was to be more associated with the name, but a blatant Green Hornet knock-off.

When patrolman Dan Garrett stumbles across a dying banker, he decides to investigate the "White Mask" gang responsible for the man's murder. Retreating into his druggist friend Abe's shop, Dan emerges... driving a high-powered car. It is only a few panels later that the White Mask Gang finds a blue beetle scurrying across a table top, announcing the presence of a figure garbed in a blue double-breasted suit with

A closeup of Joe Simon's phenomenal art used on the cover of Mystery Men #10 (May 1940)

scarab amulet, goggles, and fedora—The Blue Beetle!

Using his Blue Beetle Wireless Phone, The Blue Beetle phones the cops after pretending to join up with the gang, and sends the villainous White Mask Gang into a trap. Aside from appearance, Blue Beetle's parallels to the Green Hornet lie in his arsenal of gas capsules and a powerful car, as well as in his masquerading as a criminal. However, perhaps in fear of another Wonderman, it was decided to change the character's look by his next appearance.

By *Mystery Men* #2, The Blue Beetle is seen wearing chain mail armor similar to his later outfit. However, the pointed elf-like toes of his shoes, short sleeves, and antennae gave him a goofy and humorous appearance (not unlike a human counterpart to Keith Giffen's *Ambush Bug* published by DC). However, the impressive element of this version was in the large beetle emblem, that started from his left shoulder and angled down towards his right breast. This crude and static version of the costume didn't last long either, and *Mystery Men* #3 marked the final appearance of the short-sleeved costume. *Mystery Men* #4 presented the costumed Blue Beetle, wisely sans the antennae, pointy shoes, and short sleeves, squashing an extortion racket perpetrated against newsboys by the end of the four-page story.

Blue Beetle was apparently a more successful strip than The Green Mask was intended to be, leading Victor Fox to not only give the Beetle the covers of *Mystery Men*, but also to try and turn the character into his "cash cow."

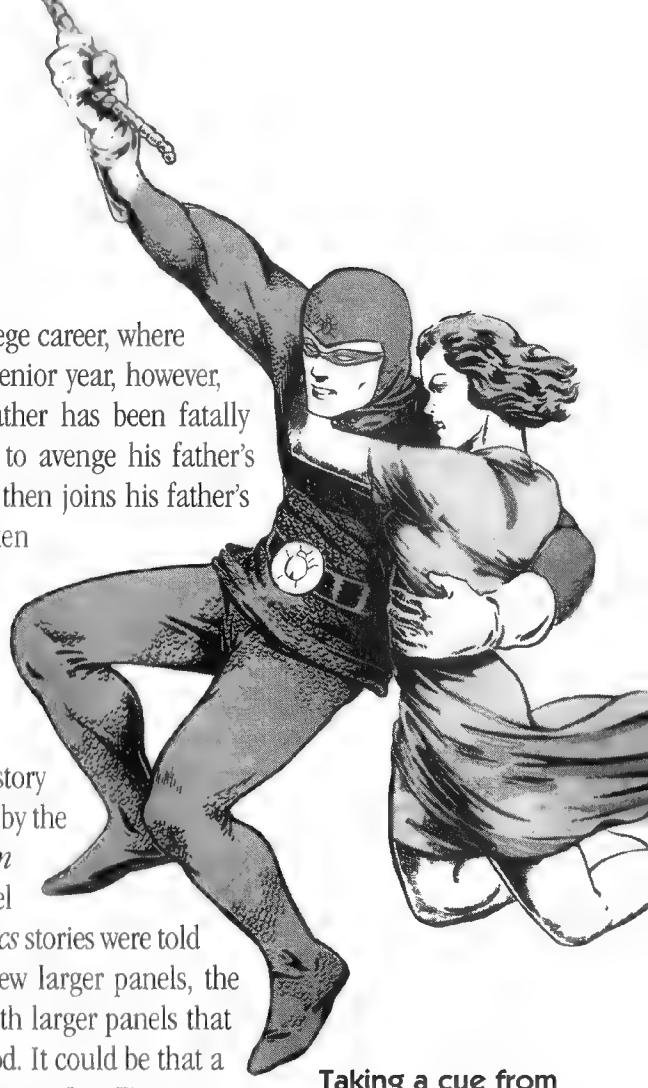
SWOOPING DOWN UPON THE DENIZENS OF THE WORLD

The Blue Beetle premiered with a cover date of Winter, 1939-1940, making him the second superhero to gain his own title, following the Summer of 1939's *Superman* #1. Victor Fox, in his legal dispute with Eisner and Iger, had lost his stable of talent-for-hire. Fox used Eisner and Iger stories and covers already in inventory for a time (Lou Fine artwork on The Flame lasted as long as thirteen issues, well into 1940), and was eventually forced to either hire his own bullpen, or look to other shops for publishable material. In an attempt to try the former, Fox hired Joe Simon for his new bullpen. Simon answered an ad that called for artists and editors at "a major comic book company." Artists on The Blue Beetle now included Pierce Rice, Arturo and Louis Cazaneuve, Al Carreno, and Sam Cooper.

As a result of losing Eisner-Iger, the artwork on Fox books went from mediocre and crude, to generally awful... Blue Beetle material in particular. It seems that the artwork for *Blue Beetle* #1 may have been inventory work from Eisner and Iger, as it is greatly improved over any Blue Beetle stories to come in the years following, and is consistent with the *Mystery Men* reprints that take up most of the issue.

The feature story of *Blue Beetle* #1 follows Dan Garrett from his birth in 1916 (to an Irish police officer father), through young adulthood. Garrett's "perfection" seeps through the panels as readers are treated to tales of his college career, where he excels in every sport. During his senior year, however, Dan receives a telegram that his father has been fatally wounded in the line of duty. Ready to avenge his father's death, Dan *first* finishes college and then joins his father's partner Mike Mannigan (the token bumbling Irishman of the strip) on the police force. That night, Dan appears as The Blue Beetle and brings his father's murderers to justice.

The artwork on the Beetle's origin story appears as if it could have been drawn by the same artist behind the *Mystery Men Comics'* stories, except for the panel layouts. While the *Mystery Men Comics* stories were told in a constipated, boxy format with few larger panels, the *Blue Beetle* #1 origin is smattered with larger panels that contain a hint of dynamism and mood. It could be that a more dynamic artist, such as Eisner or even Lou Fine, may have done the layouts for the regular Blue Beetle artist to pencil over. Eisner-Iger was off of the book within the first few issues and, in a vain attempt to find new Blue Beetle artists, Fox and his editors followed new feature stories mostly with reprint stories from *Mystery Men*. At about the same time as Eisner-Iger's exit, Garrett and Mannigan's reporter companion Charley Storm disappeared from the cheaply-printed pages of *Blue Beetle*.



Taking a cue from NY World's Fair but predating World's Finest, Big 3 #1 (Fall 1940) teamed BB with two other Fox stars... Sampson and The Flame. Also pictured is BB #8 (Aug 1941)

Victor Fox felt he had a success on his hands with *Blue Beetle*, and was anxious to emulate DC's growing success with Superman. While the *Superman* daily comic strip appeared in newspapers on January 16, 1939, Fox decided to compete with it with a *Blue Beetle* daily strip, which premiered January 8, 1940. Likewise, after the *Superman* radio show first hit the airwaves of the Mutual Radio Network on February 12, 1940, Fox somehow got a *Blue Beetle* radio show syndicated and it first aired on May 15, 1940. Ultimately, both Fox media projects failed, and The Blue Beetle continued on exclusively in comic books, appearing in all 31 issues of *Mystery Men Comics* and in the *Big 3* anthology title, which lasted from Fall, 1940 through January, 1942.

The fourth issue of *Blue Beetle*, dated Fall, 1940, introduced two new and important elements to the series: the Vitamin 2-X, which imbued Dan Garrett with increased strength, intelligence, and generally heightened his abilities... and love interest Joan Mason (who replaced Charley Storm). After having been gunned down by dope peddlers (who sell to children in broad daylight), Dan is given an emergency blood transfusion. Visiting Dan at the hospital, Dr. Franz gives Dan his special Vitamin 2-X, which speeds up his recovery and makes him "one tough hombre." Sometimes The Blue Beetle would only be equipped with his impenetrable chain-link armor, and other times he would down a vial or swallow a capsule of Dr. Franz's steroid-like formula to become a powerhouse. (Given Fox's penchant for merchandising, especially Kooba Kola, it seems almost amazing that Victor Fox didn't try to market a "Vitamin 2-X" chewable vitamin or candy.)

But as testament to either his cavalier attitude towards continuity (or to the amount of stories Fox held in inventory), the next issue (#5) featured "Blue Beetle's New Powers," a story which introduces Vitamin 2-X... curiously presented an issue after the fact!

Another change, this one only cosmetic, debuted on the cover of issue #9. Rather than drawing the character with yellow arrow gloves and belt, the cover colorist gave him red gloves and belt. The very next issue debuted the red gloves in the stories, and had Garrett start changing into his Blue Beetle costume à la the way Clark Kent dons his Superman togs, rather than magically appearing from off-panel as his costumed alter ego.

Mystery Men #18 (Jan 1941) and #19 (Feb 1941)

Most early Fox issues featured four Blue Beetle stories and roughly three back-up features. Back-ups included Davy The Wishmaker (an uninspired attempt at a humor strip), and K-51: Spies At War signed by Willis B. Rensie (a pseudonym for Will Eisner or one of his shop artists).

When Joe Simon left his editor's position (after about three months, with newfound partner Jack Kirby) W. W. Scott was briefly hired as editor, then followed by Abner Sundell.

Editor Scott had hired soon-to-be prolific comic writer Robert Kanigher (who would later serve as instrumental in the creation of DC's Sgt. Rock, the Silver Age Flash, and Metal Men, to name only a few). Kanigher, who was to stay with Fox in both incarnations of the company before eventually moving to DC, recalled his first meeting with Scott:

"I answered an ad (things were very bad at our house, economically) and walked into an office about a mile long. At the end of it is a desk about the size of a football field. Behind it is a bald head. The bald head says to me 'Tell me a story.'

"Without breaking stride, I said 'A skeleton is driving an open convertible from Times Square (not someone in a costume, but a real skeleton) and people are running in sheer panic.'

"He said 'I like a man who thinks on his feet.'"

When Victor Fox left the comic book business in 1942 (former Fox and Quality Comics artist Chuck Cuidera claims Fox was once about to go to jail), the printer to whom he owed money continued Blue Beetle. With *Blue Beetle* #12, Holyoke (who had, ironically, produced the *Green Hornet* comic book before Harvey attained the license) took over the title for two issues, utilizing inventory material from Fox (much like Fox most likely started *Blue Beetle* using inventory from Eisner-Iger). Issue #14 was the start of original material from Holyoke, in which Dan Garrett became a G-Man, rather than a cop, and attained an obligatory sidekick in the form of Sparkington J. Northrup, a blond lad in a legless version of the Blue Beetle costume. "Sparky's" name mysteriously changed to "Spunky" by issue #17, and he was (gratefully) retired by issue #19.

Other changes in the Holyoke issues of *Blue Beetle* included turning York City into Central City, as well as pushing The Blue Beetle as a patriotic character who often traveled abroad for undercover missions (à la Simon and Kirby's Captain America). In these new issues, there was no mention of Beetle's Vitamin 2-X or its originator, Dr. Franz. Joan Mason was absent, to be replaced by Sally Kirby. Rather than fighting uninspired racketeers, Blue Beetle now faced characters such as the deformed and masked Nazi General Wiltz, or the Beetle's own identical Nazi counterpart, Fritz, BB even found himself battling a city-full of people drugged by Dr. Marks' "truth gas." The Holyoke stories, concocted by a team of now-unknown writers, were generally a bit more structured than the Fox stories, but not really much of an improvement.

In contrast to the Fox run of the title (which had included a handful of back-up features as well as the main story), Holyoke often featured no more than one or two Beetle stories with a number of unrelated back-ups, including Spark Stevens (drawn by a young Joe Kubert), Tamaa, and Crime Reporter, plus a slew of "Real Life" biographies on historical figures. The artists on the Holyoke *Blue Beetle* are all either unbilled, or use pseudonyms like "Sid Lazarus." While Charles Quinlan (then an editor at Holyoke) has been credited with the art chores, his

WHO CREATED BLUE BEETLE?

(Continued from page 22)

"Yes, I did," Cuidera claimed when asked about his involvement with the character's creation. "Although there's some guy with a Polish name, I never met him. I made that thing go. [He was] the only other person that I knew that did Blue Beetle, and he only did the covers, was Lou Fine."

"I don't know who he is, anyway... the guy that was going around [saying] that he created Blue Beetle. Him, I don't know; all I know is that I used my first and middle name: Charles Nicholas Cuidera."

Cuidera was hired by Joe Simon, and apparently seated in front of a young artist by the name of Jack Kirby; the future artist and co-creator of Captain America, Fantastic Four, and Thor (among many others) was then working on a back-up feature titled "Cosmic Carson." After leaving Fox Comics, Cuidera went to Quality Comics, working through Will Eisner in 1940, and directly for "Busy" Arnold shortly after.

Unfortunately, Wotjkowski died before Cuidera's claim to Blue Beetle's creation came to the forefront of fandom awareness, leaving a void in the debate.

Noted comic book historian Ron Goulart, however, doesn't believe that Cuidera drew the early Blue Beetle stories.

"Charles Nicholas did some stuff later for Big Shot Comics, that he signed, and some stuff for Marvel. He did work with Simon and Kirby on some early Captain America. His style is really recognizable," Goulart commented.

"Cuidera used to work at Fox...[that work] is a completely different style. If you'd look at Cuidera when he did the first Blackhawk stuff in about 1941, and then when you look at 1940's Blue Beetle: nobody changes that much in a year. The layouts are different, and the whole approach to drawing is different. My studied opinion is... that is not Cuidera. I can't tell you that Cuidera never drew Blue Beetle, because I don't have a complete run, but he certainly isn't the guy who did those early issues.

"If you look at the layouts who, I believe, are from the other Charles Nicholas, it is laid out completely different than anything Cuidera did. There are long shots, and everybody is skinny. There are a lot of shots of street scenes, as I recall. It was very stiff and amateurish. Cuidera was already, in his first Blackhawk, much different.

"I think you need to just take it with what your eyes tell you. If you have those first four stories, and then look at the first few Blackhawks, there is no comparison in the approach, not just in how it's drawn, but in how it's laid out. That's my opinion."

Recently, former Charlton Comics art director, and creator of Judomaster, Frank McLaughlin, told of Nicholas's claim to the character while working at Charlton.

"Charlie Nicholas and I had had conversations about Blue Beetle, and I was definitely under the impression that he had created Blue Beetle," McLaughlin said. "Joe Gill [writer of the early Charlton Blue Beetle] and I had conversations about it, subsequent to that, more recently. He agrees that he's sure that Nicholas penciled it, as well as creating it, although we're not sure who inked it."

Besides the opinions and recollections of Goulart, McLaughlin, and Gill, there is another problem with the Cuidera claim. Blue Beetle was not produced at Fox Comics in 1939, but at the Eisner-Iger shop's Tudor City studio, before the results of the Wonderman lawsuit caused Eisner-Iger's departure, whereas Cuidera did not join with Eisner until his stint for "Busy" Arnold's Quality Comics in 1940, after he had worked for Fox.

If Cuidera did not work for Eisner until Eisner's association with "Busy" Arnold and Quality Comics, the likelihood of his drawing the first Blue Beetle is not that likely. Also, Cuidera claims to have been hired by Simon, when Simon didn't work for Fox until after Blue Beetle was started through Eisner-Iger.

It is possible, however, that Cuidera either inked or gave art assists on the Blue Beetle strip, which would explain his recollection of having worked on it, as well as giving an identity to the inker (if it wasn't Kirby himself).

There is also the matter of the troubling matter of name "Charles Nicholas:" could it be pure coincidence that the pen name of the Blue Beetle artist was the same as all but Cuidera's last name?

I think the origin of the pen-name, as well as the creator of Blue Beetle, is still shrouded in clouds of mystery.... ■

son denies the claim. If that is the case, it is possible that Quinlan may have only provided an occasional touch-up or panel redrawing. The Holyoke run lasted until issue #30, dated February, 1944.

THE KING RETURNS

His apparent troubles behind him, Victor Fox returned to comics in 1944, taking back the *Blue Beetle* and jump-starting Fox Publications back to life. The *Blue Beetle* comic book continued, with this second wave bringing a new twist to the character... his powers became maddeningly inconsistent. BB could do everything... from growing in size to changing his physical appearance. Blue Beetle was now attempting to be Superman as he could suddenly fly and lift school buses with one hand. Also, he was often featured in more fantasy-like stories as opposed to the earlier crime stories. Due to Blue Beetle's sudden super powers, there was no longer any need for Dr. Franz or his Vitamin 2-X.

Perhaps in an attempt to make the book more noticeable, *Blue Beetle* featured the "Comics Hall of Fame," which ran from issue #36 to #39 and featured two lucky child contestants actually drawn into the story with the Blue Beetle (and the returning Joan Mason). Making sure Batman concepts were also filched and placed into the stories, Fox introduced the Beetlemobile, the Beetlebird (a plane), and the Beetleboat, all while BB traveled around with the two lucky "Hall of Fame"

winners on trivial and random adventures.

Other Fox mainstays remained, especially Mike Mannigan (who was now drawn in a thinner version (apparently Mike worked off all the weight during the war)... and Dan Garrett remained a "rookie cop" despite his years on the force and stint as a secret agent. Not only did Joan Mason once more appear in the Blue Beetle's adventures, but also in equally badly drawn adventures of her own, pursuing stories for "The Daily Planet," which had previously been called "The Daily Blade" in early Fox.

The only attempt at serializing Blue Beetle stories came in the form of "The Threat from Saturn," a five-part (loosely continuous) story that started in #34 and sent The Blue Beetle up against the Saturnian aliens Gloat and Saturnia. The alien pair served only to send Blue Beetle through a countless number of ridiculous adventures with themes that included "mind control" and "an army of zombies."

Mystery Men Comics #20 (Mar 1941) and #22 (May 1941, cover by Chuck Cuidera)

Most all of the Blue Beetle stories were now signed by "Otis," a pen name that replaced the departing "Charles Nicholas" for the remainder of the title's publishing days at Fox. Where the art at Holyoke may have been mediocre at best, the art on the early second Fox run of *Blue Beetle* has been described by some collectors and historians as "sub-standard."

"The interesting thing about [The Blue Beetle], is that his power and various things about him were inconsistent," comics writer, historian, and fanzine pioneer Roy Thomas said. "In one story, he's Superman, and the next, he's Batman. This is all because Victor Fox didn't have a vision for him, and neither did anyone else."

In 1946, Victor Fox once again enrolled the services of Jerry Iger, who had parted ways with Will Eisner around 1940 and started a new shop with secretary-then-partner Ruth Roache. The Iger-Roache shop produced work for Fiction House and Classics Illustrated, as well, working for Fox for (possibly) the remainder of the book's run. Having been inspired anew by the wartime pin-ups cherished by GIs overseas, Fox increased the sex content of *Blue Beetle*. The result was what have come to be known Headlight Comics... or comics portraying women with exaggerated or greatly enlarged breasts.

"The Fox Headlight Comics usually minimized the BLUE BEETLE figure in every panel, not really showing him to good effect," AC Comics' editor and comics historian Mark Heike said. "[The stories were] mostly about Joan Mason. The Blue Beetle was in them, but was almost secondary."

Artwork on the Blue Beetle stories was done by EC notables Jack Kamen and Al Feldstein. Due to the assembly-line nature of the Iger shop (where one artist was known to work on only one part of a story) it is difficult to attribute work to a specific artist.

"The figures were generally well-done," Heike said of the Headlight comics. "The best of the headlight *Blue Beetles* were done by Jack Kamen. He was not a great layout man, especially at that time, nor was he great with action figures... but his girls were really well drawn, but everything else fell to the waysides... Which is not to denigrate Jack Kamen, who went on to become a very acclaimed artist, but was obviously not a guy who was suited to do superhero characters. I would have to rate Matt Baker ["The King of the Good Girl Artists"], or most of the Fiction House artists, ahead of what was done on *Blue Beetle*."

With issue #52 (January 1948), *Blue Beetle* became a "True Crime" comic book, with The Blue Beetle himself serving as a mere host. Perhaps Fox was caught in the post-war glut that infected comics in the late '40s... but whatever the case, the title ended with #60 in August of 1950. While the cover featured the title character amidst an explosion, it probably ended with a fizzle rather than a bang.

The character of the Blue Beetle wouldn't stay dead, however, as he only stayed in comic book limbo for a short time. Obtaining the property from the defunct Fox Comics, Charlton Comics returned BB to publication in *Space Adventures* #13 (October/November, 1954). A short time later, Charlton canceled their title *The Thing!* with issue #17, and the series became *The Blue Beetle* with #18 (February 1955) and featured a new story with reprinted stories from Fox's *Blue Beetle* #40.

"On the heels of the *Superman* TV show, Charlton did a handful of issues," Roy Thomas said. "There were some new stories, but they were also reprinting some old, badly drawn and written stories."

This new *Blue Beetle* series only lasted until #21 (August 1955), giving the character a short-lived four-issue run that was given over by the ubiquitous *Mr. Muscles* with #22. Charlton still hadn't given up on the character, despite the failure of the revival, and they were to revive him in his next incarnation a few more years later.

Special thanks to David Siegel, Mark Heike, Tom DeHaven, Robin Snyder, Will Eisner, Joe and Jim Simon, Joe Kubert, Robert Kanigher, Ron Goulart, Roy Thomas, George Tuska, Ray Bonis, and anyone else I may have regrettably overlooked. Your support is what has made this article possible.

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"He was a true nonpareil, an artist whose style was unmistakingly his own, and there's been no one remotely like him in the field since."

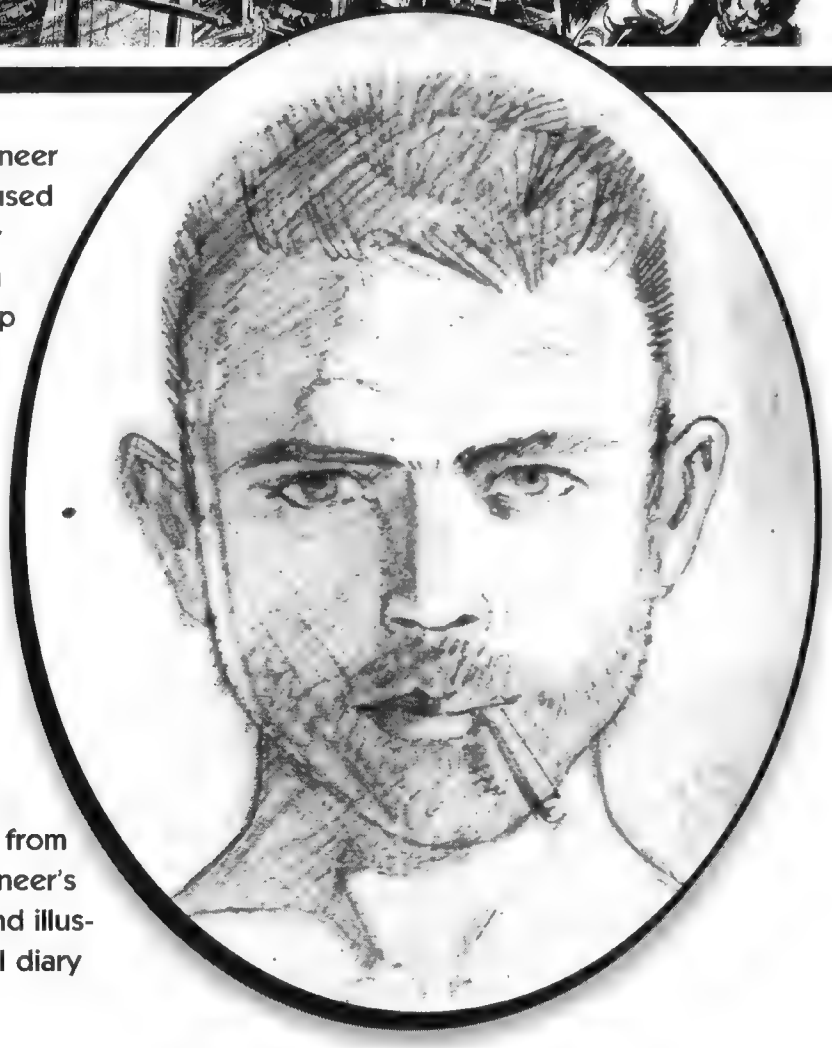
So begins Ron Goulart's description in the pages of *The Great Comic Book Artists* of the artistic career of Fred Guardineer. An artist without parallel. An artist who had the unique ability to perceive each page of a comic book as an entire work of art, not simply a collection of disjointed panels. An artist whose deep heavy lines and poster-like renderings defined a style that was completely unprecedented.

By Todd Severin

Fred Guardineer truly was one of the great artists of the early days of comic books. His comic book career spanned 20 years, creating a series of classic covers for the early DC comics, and unforgettable stories for publishers such as DC, Lev Gleason, Quality, and Magazine Enterprises (ME). With the recent death of Vin Sullivan, Fred has been recognized as the only remaining contributor of note to *Action Comics* #1, the issue that introduced Superman to the world. Fred also had a "Speed Saunders" story in *Detective Comics* #27, making him the only living artist to have contributed to the two most important comic books of all time.

While this distinction is flattering, and worthy enough of this profile, it only tells part of the story. Fred Guardineer was one of the early pioneers of the burgeoning comic book industry. Beginning his career in the infantile days of the industry, his work helped to create the Golden Age explosion that rocked the publishing world in the 1940's. He was there from the excitement of the early days till the crumbling demise of comics in the 1950s. His story, in many ways, is a mirror of the tumultuous times that every artist faced as they struggled to make their mark in the art world.

A Candid Conversation with the Legendary FRED



Early Guardineer original art used as a chapter heading in a Western pulp magazine

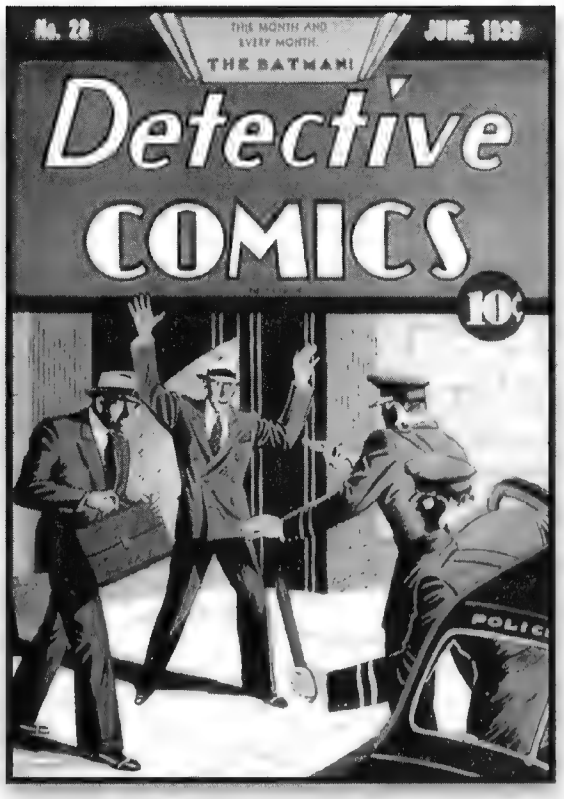
Self portrait from Fred Guardineer's personal (and illustrated) WWII diary

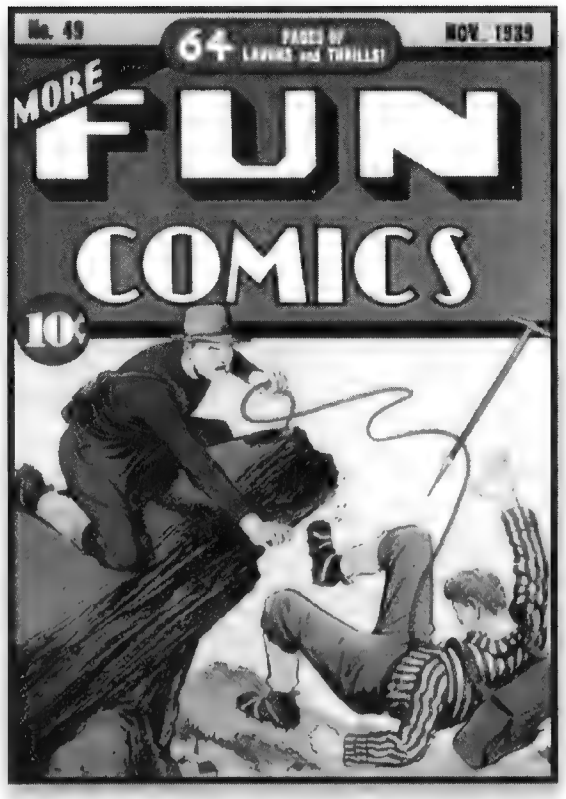
PURELY BY CHANCE

My introduction to Fred happened purely by chance. One day, among the commotion of my ophthalmology practice, I happened to recognize the last name of one of my patients, Gary Guardineer. Never shy of my hobby, I mentioned that there was a famous comic book artist with that same last name. The man smiled and simply said, "Yes. He's my dad."

With that I learned that Fred had not passed away, as many believed, and in fact had recently relocated to my hometown. I told Gary that there were a tremendous number of people who loved and admired his father's work and inquired about his willingness to meet his fans. When Gary mentioned this to his father, Fred was taken by surprise. Like most of the artists of his generation, Fred had absolutely no idea of the respect that existed for his work among the ranks of comic fandom.

That was three years ago.





GUARDINEER

Since then, Fred has been the guest of honor at an AACC dinner, received an Inkpot Award for his lifetime contributions to the world of comics, reunited with his longtime friends Vin Sullivan, Creig Flessel, and Will Eisner, and will soon be the subject of a book retrospective of his life and a video interview series of the great comic book artists.

Fred has taken all this newfound fame in stride.

ARRIVAL

The studio apartment in the well-maintained senior retirement complex wasn't at all what I expected it to be. The recently earned Inkpot Award proudly adorned the wall next to Fred's favorite chair and a Blondie calendar hung crookedly on the wall by the front door. Four small ink sketches of foxes, rhinos, birds, and lynxes—old school assignments from a rendering class in college—occupied space on the remaining, otherwise barren walls. Moving through the comfortable, well-lived in apartment, I realized that there were no other clues that this was the home of one of the legends of comic books.

I guess somewhere in my mind I imagined that Fred's apartment would be a museum-quality display of some of the greatest art of the Golden Age; framed covers from *Action, Adventure,* and *Detective* adorning the walls. That wasn't the case. Like all other artists of his time, Fred didn't own his artwork. What few pieces he did manage to save were pulled from the trash after that month's issue had been sent off to the press. Mementos and souvenirs of those nascent days of the industry simply did not exist.

Fred greeted me with smiling eyes hidden behind his thick glasses. Dressed in a comfortable flannel workshirt and khakis, he reclined in his favorite, well-worn recliner while he guided me to the couch. I opted instead for a stool which I pulled close to him. In the background, the Syracuse University vs. Notre Dame basketball game played silently on the television. Fred, an old Syracuse University graduate, flashed a glance at the

Classic Guardineer art was used for many of the great DC covers... including these three from 1939 – Action #12, Detective #28, and More Fun #49

ACTION DETECTIVE & MORE FUN
© 2000 DC

score and noted with a confident grin that Syracuse was safely up 62 to 49.

With the knowledge of their victory imminent, Fred focused his attention on me and the stack of artwork and crumpled reproduction of *Action* #1 that I carried in my hands.

THE EARLY DAYS

"Art was all I wanted to do as a kid," Fred said, leaning back in his recliner. "I was an only child and basically all I wanted was somebody to give me a paper bag and a pencil and I'd lie down on the floor and draw.

"I was born in Albany, my father was an attorney for AT&T. I grew up in Westchester county. In those days, you had drawing classes in school, and of course I was the best one. I simply had talent. I had friends in the neighborhood who were professional artists and illustrators, and they liked my work as a kid and encouraged my parents to let me go at it. They also told them what it'd be like when I went to look for work, it was the hardest job in the world, and my parents would have to back me up.

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LOVE BLOOMS EVERYWHERE! EVEN ON A DOOMED REFUGEE SHIP! EVEN··· WHEN THE GIRL HATES THE MAN!, SHE IS FATED TO LOVE···

Guardineer's original art used for the splash page of "Black Jack" (Movie Love #6) and "September Affair" (Movie Love #5)

"One of my neighbors was named Frank Moser and he did the Terry Toons movie cartoons. He was real supportive of me and I always thought of working for him, But two of his employees, a guy named Hanna and one named Barbera, by all kinds of underhanded stuff, managed to get the Terry Toons away from him. By the time I was through college and wanted a job, he couldn't do anything about it.

"My parents realized I was going to be an artist. I went to the Albany Boys Academy, a private school. I knew that if I could get through there, I could go to any college in the country, but I could never pass chemistry (*Laughter*). My English teacher took me up to the education department and I took a freehand drawing test, a regent, never having seen a god-damned regent before, and I got an 85. So, in a sense, I did have a course in drawing, meaning I took the exam and passed.

"The professors told my family that they wanted me to go to art school, and they pointed out that Syracuse University had both a liberal arts education and an art program. There were two programs there, real art—oil painting and stuff like that—and illustration. I went to the illustration program."

September AFFAIR
Starring
JOAN FONTAINE AND JOSEPH COTTEN
LOVE WAS LOST AND FOUND IN SEPTEMBER ··UNDER THE ROMANTIC SKIES OF SUNNY NAPLES AND DREAD REALITY OF A PLANE CRASH AT SEA···
AEROLINEE ITALIANE INTERNAZIONALI
ART BY FRED GUARDINEER

Were you interested at that time in going into comic strips?

"No. But I liked comics. That would be the Sunday papers. I liked the *Katzenjammer Kids* and *Maggie and Jiggs*. As a kid, I just liked any kind of a comic I could get my hands on. But in order to get the comics, we had to get the *Journal*. My father was a republican and wouldn't allow a dirty Hearst paper in the house. But they had all the good comics, see?

"My father liked the *Tribune*, which had no comics. I know he tried to get me the *Journal* so I could have the comics, but after a while he couldn't stand it (*Laughter*). So I convinced my neighbors to give me the comics so I could read them. I was one of the many kids on the block, walking around on Monday morning, going to all the houses trying to get the comics to read from the Sunday papers."

What led you into comics?

"I was interested in drawing and had good training at Syracuse. Through my art teacher, I met some artists who were down in New York City making a living, so I'd go down and visit them and they'd give me practical advice and tell me what I'd have to do. It was rough. Back then the only magazines were *Colliers* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. The only thing really available for an artist with my talent was the pulps.

"So I started in the pulps. I'd get $5 for a chapter heading. I tried a couple of oil cover paintings but I wasn't as good as I had to be. But I did like my black and white.

"I got my first chapter heading because I went to college (*Laughter*). I walked into this place, this pulp magazine, and the guy says, 'You went to college? I'll give you some sports.' He says, 'my Goddamned artists won't touch sports.' That was the way it was then. If the artist got any say about it or any seniority, they hated sports. It's tricky. You can't just throw a pretty picture together. Sports are really technical.

"So I got my start because I could do sports. He figured that since I'd been to college, I'd seen a lot of sports. He gave me a water polo story. Jesus Christ, I'd never even seen water polo in my life! I hadn't the faintest idea what it looked like (*Laughter*). So, I went down to the New York City Public Library, found a stack of reference papers and found a picture that fit the story and traced it and that's how I got my start. I always said that I'd swipe anything to get the picture."

Fred's attention suddenly shifted to the silent television and his eyes grew wide. The once insurmountable Syracuse lead had dwindled to a 69 to 66 nail-biter. I dropped my clipboard as Notre Dame sank a perimeter shot and the lead plummeted to one with only four minutes remaining. We watched the game together, in stunned silence, holding our breaths until the final buzzer sounded, securing the Syracuse victory.

With a satisfied smile, Fred sank back into his recliner and turned to me.

"That was good, wasn't it?"

Are you a basketball fan?

"Not really. You know when I went to college, no one cared for basketball. They could be having a game in the gym and you couldn't get guys to walk across the lawn to see it. Boxing is what was big. That's what I liked."

BEGINNINGS OF THE COMIC ERA

How long did you do pulps before you got into comics?

"Not quite a year. But I amassed a bunch of work. I got quite a bit to do, they liked my work. But I couldn't support myself working at the pulps. They paid $5. A top one, like Street and Smith, paid $6, maybe $10 for a two page spread. Ew! (*Laughter*)

"But that was all I had that I could do. The only other way to get an art job was to work for an art service. In those days for advertising, they didn't have many photographs, so all the pictures were done by artists. If some guy was selling Buicks, he'd talk to the advertising agency and the agency would take the art to an art service where a bunch of artists would work on the ad. They'd have a figure artist do the man and woman in their evening clothes, and the car specialist do the car, an architect put the mansion in the background and a landscape architect put in the trees and bushes.

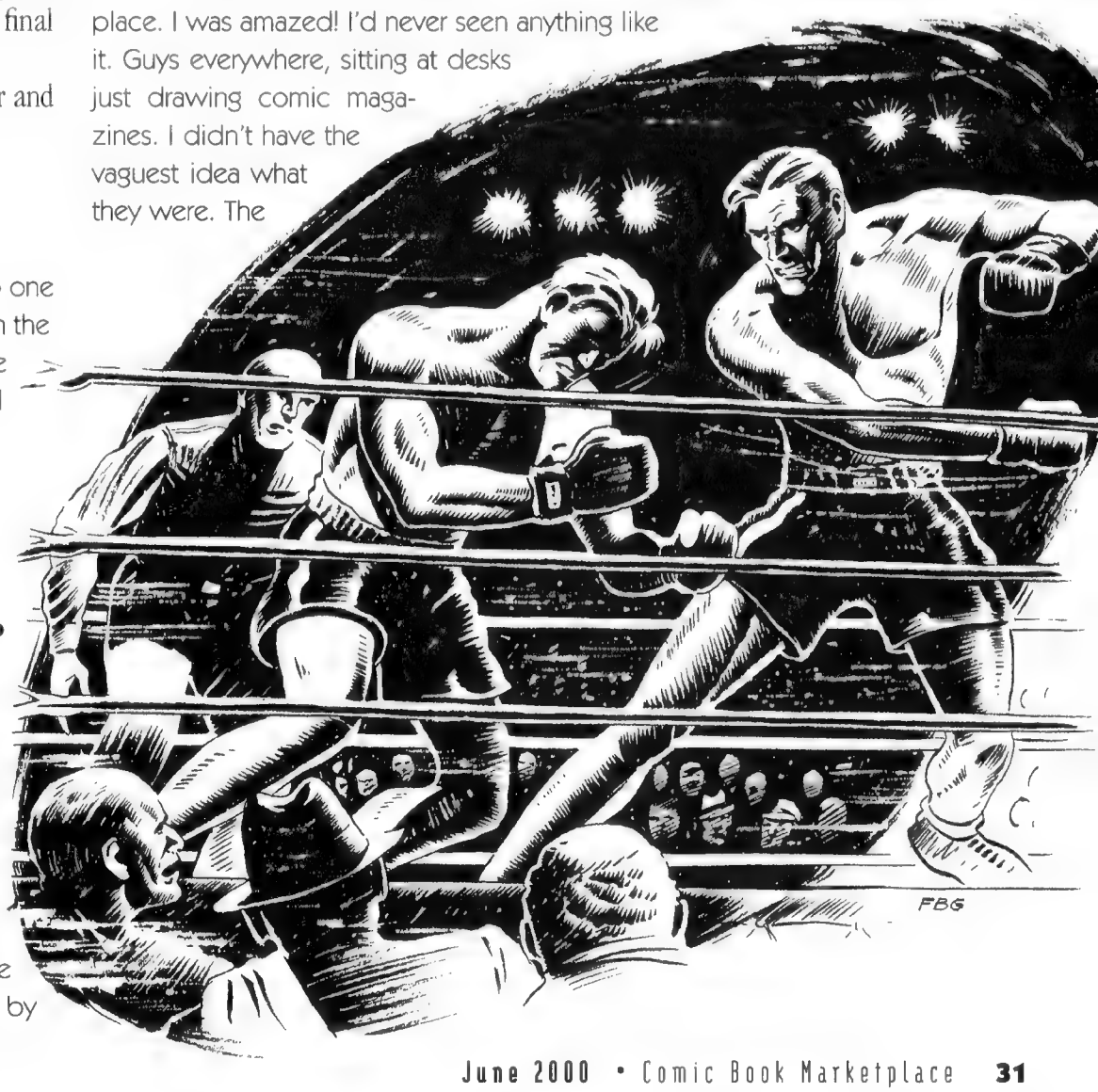
"If you worked in the art service, if you had any talent, you'd get steady work. And you'd start at about $15 a week. But to get the job you had to stand in line for about three years. That's what I was doing, standing in line. In the meantime, I was going around getting these pulp things to do.

"By this time it was getting towards fall or winter and I said, 'to hell with this.' I decided to go to Macy's or a store that adds on a lot of people at Christmas and maybe get a job in their art department doing displays. So I read the *Sunday Times* to try and find one of these jobs and saw this ad for 'Help Wanted, Artist.' It was right in the building near my hotel and they were looking for artists that drew black and white. It sounded like they wanted somebody who was doing the stuff that I was doing.

"So I went there and walked in and it was Chesler's place. I was amazed! I'd never seen anything like it. Guys everywhere, sitting at desks just drawing comic magazines. I didn't have the vaguest idea what they were. The

© 2000 DC

Early Guardineer original art intended for use as a chapter heading in a pulp magazine



nearest thing to them was what you bought at the railroad station, a book of Sunday reprints to read on the train. No book had been put out in that fashion where they told a story in comic form.

"Just by looking, I didn't know what I'd be doing, but it looked like it was right up my alley. So I argued with Chesler and got the pay raised from $15 to $20 and suddenly I had a job. I sat at a desk and drew my brains out."

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Who were the other artists there with you?

"Creig Flessel. Ogden Whitney. Those guys were my friends for life. Flessel and I would hunt and fish together. Whitney followed me around in the army all the time.

"Those guys also knew about the Major and his studio, which is where Vin Sullivan was. So I was there between the two places, turning out books. Chesler had some weird books, but the Major was the one who had *New Fun, Adventure* and *Detective*. The real comic books. The superior ones, the ones that made it. Chesler's didn't make it."

What were your memories of Chesler?

"We were good friends (*Laughter*). He just made me laugh. He was so blustery. He could do anything. At time he was working on comics and trying to put comics together and he had a good crew. But he could have done anything. He had his own definition of comics, too. He said that comics were a pizza with square corners. And I remember one day he came up to me after I took the job and he said, "Now you're working for the American public. The American public is a twelve-year-old moron, and don't you forget it." (*Laughter*)

"I can remember after that first day when I went in to see Chesler and he hired me, the first chance I got I called home and told my folks I got a job. 'I'm drawing cowboys and Indians. You didn't have to send me to college for that, but thanks anyways." (*Laughter*)

The door to Fred's apartment opened slowly, and a vibrant, elderly woman peaked her head in. She winked at me as she introduced herself as Agnes.

"He's my best friend," she said, her smile encompassing her entire face. "I always stop by to take care of him. And if he acts up, I teach him a lesson or two."

Fred laughed and Agnes's smile grew even larger. The warmth between them was obvious, and gave me a good feeling as well. When I first entered the apartment, I couldn't help but notice the medicine time-table on the nightstand by Fred's bed. Being a doctor, I instinctively tabulated each prescription and made a mental assessment of Fred's health. As I spoke with him, I was impressed with his robustness, having just passed his 87th birthday, but I did notice that Fred had some difficulty moving around in his small apartment, and that made me worry.

But with Agnes around, it was nice to see that Fred was in good hands.

More early Guardineer original art used as pulp chapter headings

THE DAWN OF THE GOLDEN AGE

So it was through Creig Flessel that you got to meet the Major?

"Yes. Major and Vin Sullivan and the guys there. We used to intermingle. Tell stories about each other. Most of the guys working for the Major were all freelance. I even freelanced a feature for him. Eight pages for five bucks, that's forty bucks. He still owes me." (*Laughter*)

Rumor has it that you were the one who opened up the door for Siegel and Shuster to come to DC.

"Yes. That's true."

How'd that happen?

"Well, that's when Donenfeld came into the picture. What the Major could never get was somebody to take the books and put them on the stands and have the connections to sell them. You know, they were all gangsters, pay-off labor unions and stuff like that.

"But there was this guy, Donenfeld, who put out girlie magazines, sex magazines. Just at this time, LaGuardia got

elected mayor of New York City on a reform ticket to clean up the city and about the first thing he did was call Donenfeld and tell him to get his Goddamned magazines off the stands or he'd take them off himself. Donenfeld was shaking in his boots and he took all his magazines out. So there he was looking for something to publish and that's how he got the three comic books."

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Action # 15 (ABOVE LEFT) features Guardineer's rendition of Superman on its cover

The covers of Action #12 and 14 (ABOVE RIGHT) showcased Fred Guardineer's Zatara and were once overlooked by Action collectors because they did not have Superman on the cover

So he bought them from the Major?

"Yeah, he bought them from the Major, or stole them. I think he bought them. And even with this money, the Major never paid the millions of people he owed, but we didn't care because now we had a publisher. He took us and we moved to his office up on Lexington Avenue, a nice section of the city.

"So up there, we had this big office that used to put out girlie magazines. The place was full of ashcans full of photographs of naked women and things they had to throw out when they closed down the girlie magazines. Donenfeld still had a desk there where his mistress sat, like she was working. But she wasn't working. If he'd bang on the wall, she'd go in and give him a party.

"Anyway, we had this big room with big windows overlooking the city to put out our magazines. The only reason I'm there is because I'm an artist, but I'm from Albany and came down to the city for work, so I had to live in a hotel room. I couldn't really do artwork in the hotel room with a drawing board on my knees, so I got office space and a desk to do my drawing.

"So I spent my time doing features in the office, with Sullivan and the other guys who were editorial. Most of the time when a problem came up, they'd all adjourn to the CEO's room and I'd be left alone, drawing in the office. So if there was knock on the door, if I was the only one there, I'd go out and see who was coming. I'd open the door and ask them to sit down and wait.

"And that's how I met the two guys from Cleveland who had a strip to sell. They didn't show it to me, they sat down and waited for a chance to go in. I went back to drawing after they were properly welcomed and taken care of.

"Vin was the boss then. So I looked over at the two new guys and said, 'who are they?' He said those are two guys who got a strip called *Superman*. It was Siegel and Shuster. So Donenfeld hired them and they turned out this strip *Superman* for the first *Action Comics* which was being born at that time.

"Later there was a knock on the door in the same conditions and it was Bob Kane with Batman. I answered that one also."

What did you think of the Superman strip when you saw it for the first time?

"Aah, it was a strip. Not too well drawn. I didn't think anything special about it."

What about the *Batman* strip?

"By the time the Batman came around, this sort of thing was starting to click a little bit. I thought it looked pretty dark. Maybe something the kids would like. But who the hell knows. I mean we put our magazines out and they were the biggest sellers that ever hit the market. They wiped the pulps right out."

I inched closer to Fred, as he opened up the volume of Gerber's *Photo-Journal Guide to Comic Books* that I had brought. Together, we perused through the pages.

While working with Chesler, Fred drew features for *Star Comics*, *Funny Pages* and *Star Ranger*. His art for the early Chesler's was good enough to earn him his first continuing feature, "Dan Hastings," in *Star Comics*, a science fiction epic about the future invasion of Earth by aliens. Despite this output, however, Fred never drew covers.

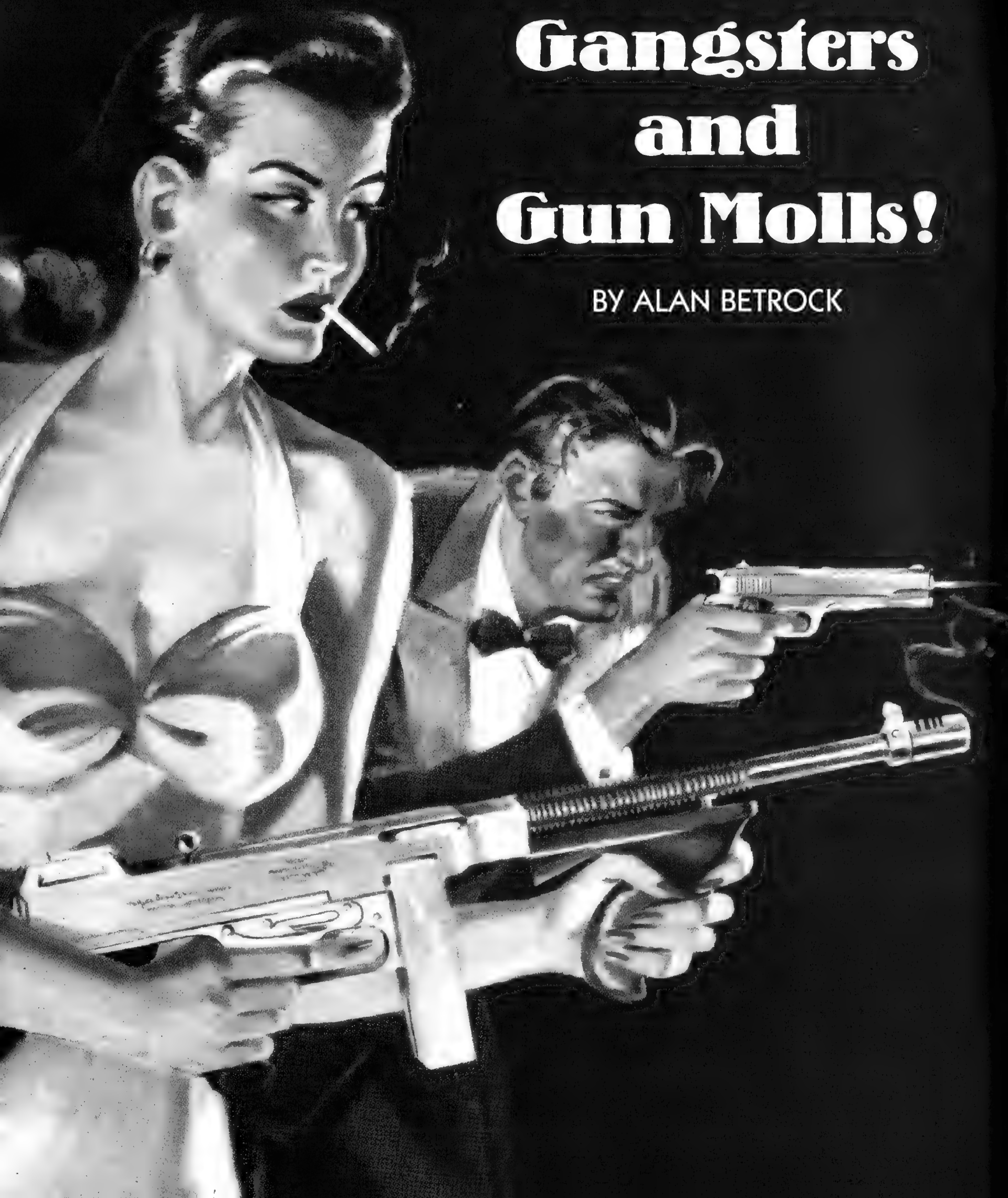
That changed once he began working for the Major. In addition to working on "Speed Saunders" in *Detective Comics*, "Anchors Aweigh" in *Adventure Comics* and "Zatara" and "Pep Morgan" in *Action Comics*, Fred produced a series of stunningly beautiful covers for the early issues of *Detective*, *More Fun*, *Adventure* and later, *Action*.

Continued on page 68

THE MAGAZINE CONNECTION!

Gangsters and Gun Molls!

BY ALAN BETROCK



There's been a lot of talk lately about the relationship between the pulp magazines and the comics, but very little written about comics and the cult exploitation magazines that flooded the newsstands after the death of the pulps. This article should prove, I hope, to be an introductory piece about some of the more interesting ties between the comics and the more adult-oriented magazines of the 1950s.

First a little background. After WWII, when paper restrictions were relaxed and there were millions of ex-soldiers who had left the U.S. as boys, but returned as men, magazine publishers sensed a huge new market for racy products. Television was becoming increasingly popular and magazine publishers struck back with what television couldn't offer—mainly sex and violence. Additionally, a 1952 entry into the magazine marketplace, *Confidential*, was an instant success, making every other publisher believe his new title could make him an overnight millionaire.

On the comics side, the Senate hearings that fostered the Comics Code Authority made comics publishers more careful about how much mayhem they could put into their comics, and many looked to the magazine racks for salvation. Many comics publishers, like Charlton, Fawcett, Hillman, Atlas, and others, were also very active in the exploitation magazine sweepstakes that was all the rage from coast to coast.

First let's take a look at some of the magazines that spawned comics—mainly before the Comics Code went into effect. For starters we have the magazine *True Crime* which began in 1943 and ran through a variety of publishers, looks, and logos. When Magazine Village started up their now notorious comic, *True Crime*, they borrowed much from the popular magazine—most notably the look of the logo which for a while both the comic and magazine shared. The magazine also featured painted covers (mainly GGA of 'bad girls'...) and a lot of those looks found their way into the *True Crime* comics. While the short-lived comic series died in late 1949, the magazine continued on for over two decades more.

In 1949, Avon Periodicals published a magazine entitled, *Gangsters, Gun Molls, and G-Men*. Although it only lasted one issue, it wasn't forgotten, because two years later, Avon Periodicals/Realistic Comics started up their similarly named comic, *Gangsters and Gun Molls*. What was even more interesting was that the cover art for the 1949 magazine version was later used again as the cover for the second issue of the *Gangsters and Gun Molls* comic!

In 1945, publisher William H. Wise, started up a magazine entitled *Women in Crime*. This title proved to be very popular on the newsstands, and soon circulation was booming. Three years after the conception and publication of the *Women in Crime* magazine, Fox Comics started up their own comics version, *Crimes by Women*, a now-legendary title which is highly prized by collectors today.

Comics publisher Martin Goodman was also very active in the magazine field. For instance in the early 1950s, he started up two photo-oriented digests, *Brief* and *Focus*. They were both rather tame for the then-current field of competition as they tried to take the high road in their

The Magazine Connection

circulation battles. But in a few short years the name of Monroe Froelich Jr. supplanted that of Martin Goodman on the staff box page, and he spiced up the magazines considerably. Comics fans may be more aware of Froelich's usurpation of Goodman's comics empire. But Goodman still was plugging away, for instance publishing a nice teen-movie oriented one-shot magazine in 1957, *Young Movie Lovers*, which listed him as publisher, Froelich as business manager, and his Chipiden Publishing as copyright holder.

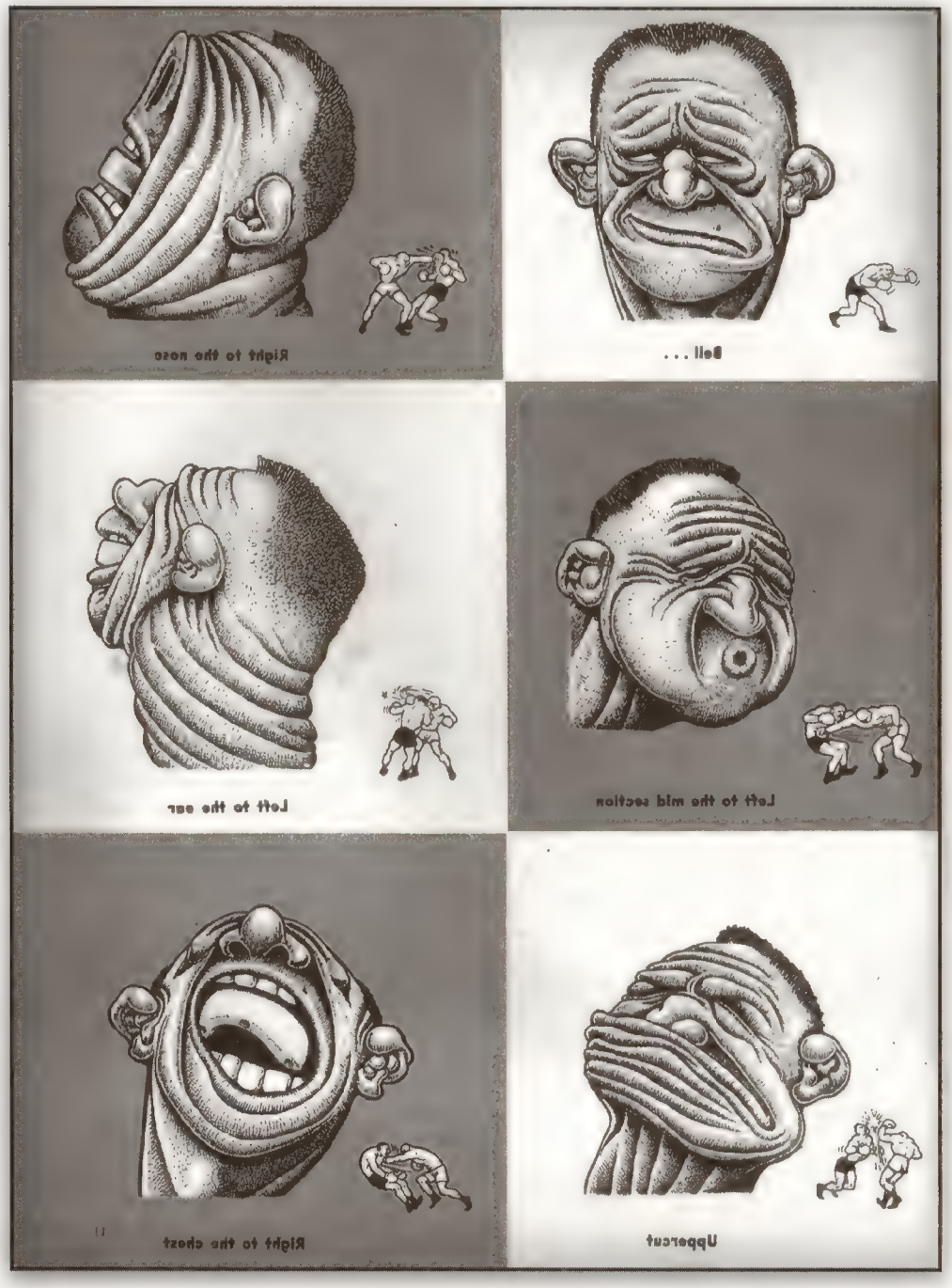
When the comics publishers were under assault by the Comics Code, they turned some of their comics titles into magazines more geared to adults. For instance, Charlton Publishing had issued their comic, *True Life Secrets*, from 1951-56, but then suddenly converted it to a racy magazine title, even continuing the numbering system—-the last comics issue was #29 and the first magazine issue was #30!

Meanwhile, St. John Publishing had issued the comic *Diary Secrets* until issue #30 (9/55), and then they stopped the comic and began a scandal-type magazine, *Secret Life*, in October 1955, once again continuing the numbering system, beginning the magazine with #31.

The magazines veered between the usage of original artwork and photographs, although the artists were rarely, if ever, identified. There is a lot of research still to be done to find out which Golden Age greats contributed to the exploitation magazine field. One interesting fact is that in late 1955 and early 1956, three new titles sprung up to parody the Hollywood scandal magazines like *Confidential, Whisper, On the QT, Hush-Hush*, and dozens of others. These three magazines... *Bunk, Cockeyed, and Cuckoo*... were full of original art by comics greats and would be great additions to any comics collectors archives. For instance, I found original work by Basil Wolverton and Simon & Kirby in these parody titles, which also owe a lot to *MAD, Cracked*, et al.

So let the chase begin. Exploitation magazine collecting is still in its infancy and prices are relatively low, although the magazines themselves can often be difficult to locate. But there is a wealth of comics related material to be found there, and this brief introduction should be regarded as just a tantalizing tip of the iceberg.

A rare and little-seen page of original Basil Wolverton art from the 1956 scandal-parody magazine Cockeyed



Alan Betrock is a long time comic and magazine researcher and has written and published several books on the topic of cult exploitation magazines, through his company, Shake Books.

Read: THE GIRL WHO REFUSED TO MARRY CLARK GABLE
DECEMBER
25¢
Secret Life
THE New MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE AND REVELATION
GARY COOPER AND HIS SECRET LOVE
Revealed! ZSA ZSA GABOR'S INTIMATE LOVE LIFE
WHY HOLLYWOOD HATES JAMES MASON
Can the Unwritten Law Save This Woman
Read: SHE KILLED HER HUSBAND'S SWEETHEART
I POSED FOR NUDE PICTURES
Why SUSAN HAYWARD REALLY TOOK THOSE SLEEPING PILLS

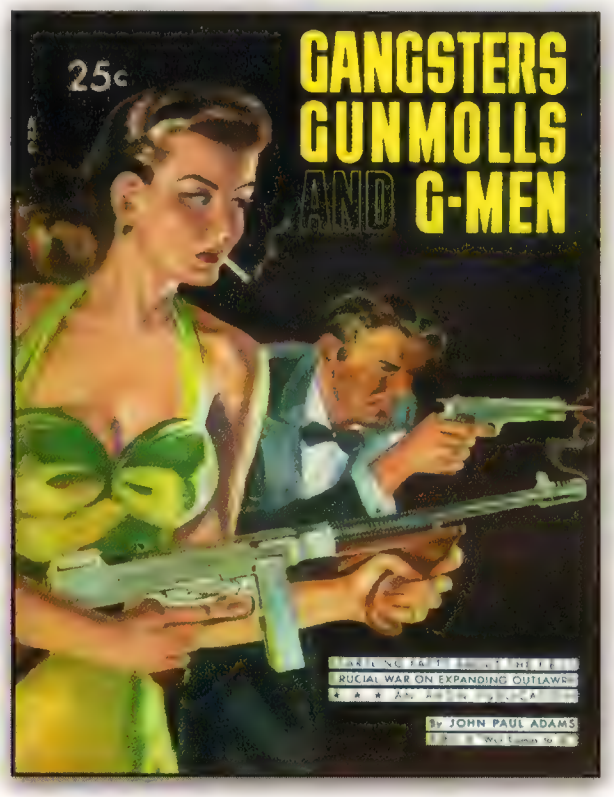
Secret Life was a continuation of the romance comic **Diary Secrets**

For a while, the **True Crime** magazines shared logos with the **True Crime** comics

Charlton's **True Life Secrets** magazine was a continuation of their **True Life Secrets** comic book

Women In Crime magazine inspired the creation of the **Crimes By Women** comic book

Two years before the appearance of the **Gangsters, Gun Molls & G-Men** comic, Avon published this one-shot magazine



BLUE BEETLE

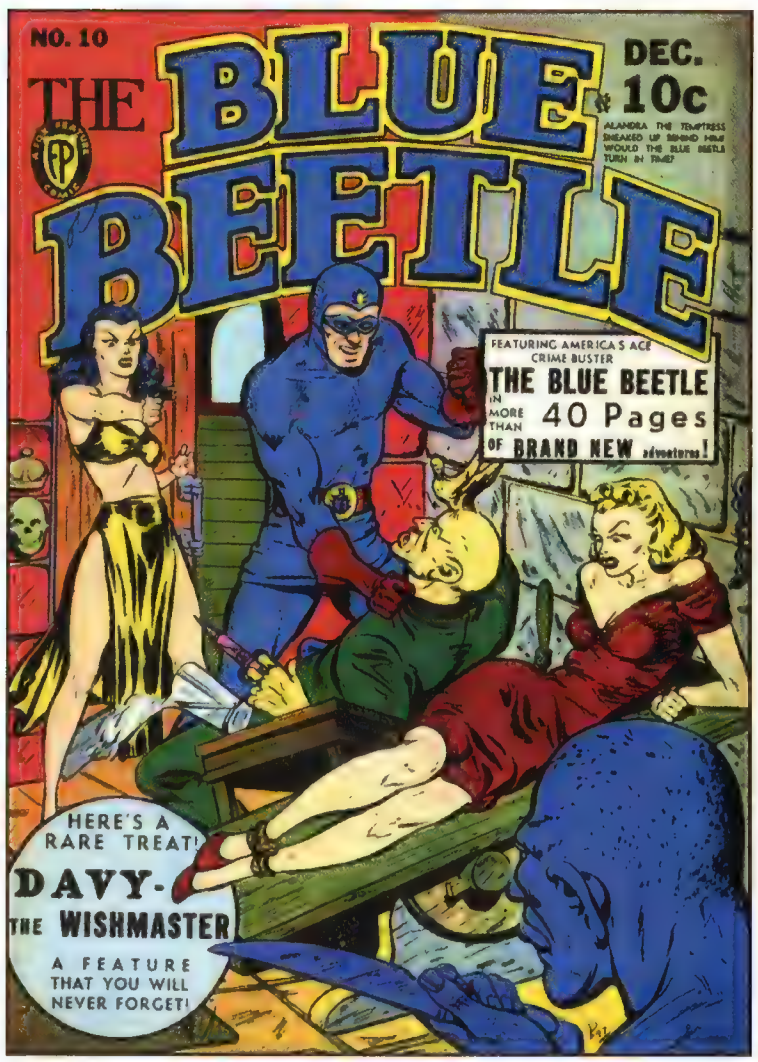
THE BLUE BEETLE
WINTER EDITION
10¢
64 PAGES IN FULL COLOR
EXCITING ADVENTURES of THE BLUE BEETLE
FOE OF THE UNDERWORLD
Also YARKO THE GREAT Master of Magic

THE BLUE BEETLE
10¢
NO. 3
64 Exciting Pages .. Two Full Length Adventures of the One and Only BLUE BEETLE
THRILLS! MYSTERY! INTRIGUE!

Blue Beetle #1 (Wint 1939); #2 (May/Jun 1940); #3 (Jul/Aug 1940); #5 (Jan/Feb 1941)

ALL COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

THE BLUE BEETLE
NO. 9
OCT. 10¢
MORE thrilling PAGES of... THE BLUE BEETLE!
The GORILLA
Before the girl could be cast into the flames The Blue Beetle was in the midst of the Demons!


NO. 10
THE BLUE BEETLE
DEC. 10c
ALANDRA THE TEMPTRESS SNEAKED UP BEHIND HIM! WOULD THE BLUE BEETLE TURN IN TIME?
FEATURING AMERICA'S ACE CRIME BUSTER
THE BLUE BEETLE
IN MORE THAN 40 Pages
OF BRAND NEW adventures!
HERE'S A RARE TREAT!
DAVY- THE WISHMASTER
A FEATURE THAT YOU WILL NEVER FORGET!

Blue Beetle #9 (Oct 1941); #10 (Dec 1941); #11 (Feb 1942); #12 (Jun 1942)

ALL COVERS COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

BLUE BEETLE IN MYSTERY MEN

10¢ MARCH
No. 8
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
EVERY ISSUE STARTLING ADVENTURES OF THE BLUE BEETLE
D-13 SECRET AGENT • GREEN MASK • ZANZIBAR

10¢ JUNE
NO. 11
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
GIFT OFFER GIANT COMICSCOPE See Inside Cover
SWINGING FROM A HEARBY ROOFTOP THE BLUE BEETLE SAILS INTO THE CONSPIRATORS
REX DEXTER • CHEN CHANG • LT. DRAKE, U.S.N.

Mystery Men Comics #7 (Feb 1940, 1st issue to feature Blue Beetle on the cover); #8 (Mar 1940, cover by Lou Fine); #11 (Jun 1940, Oriental Menace cover); #12 (Jul 1940)

ALL COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

10¢ SEPT.
NO. 14
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
64 PAGES IN FULL COLOR 12 GREAT COMICS
THE BLUE BEETLE snatched the policeman from certain death under the engine's wheels!
BLUE BEETLE | LT. DRAKE | D-13 SECRET AGENT | GREEN MASK

10¢ OCT.
NO.15
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
FREE BOTTLE OF KOOBA THE BIG DRINK
THE BLUE BEETLE Hurled The Treacherous Spy From The Wing Of The Plane.
THE BLUE BEETLE

Mystery Men Comics #14 (Sep 1940, Mile High copy); #15 (Oct 1940); #16 (Nov 1940, mad doctor with hypodermic cover, Kooba Kola ad on cover); #23 (Jun 1941)

ALL COVERS COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

BLUE BEETLE IN MYSTERY MEN

NO. 25
MYSTERY MEN COMICS
AUG. 10c
IN THIS ISSUE
BRAND NEW Balkan-Front War Thriller, PRIVATE O'HARA
Featuring 2 smash lead features The BLUE BEETLE and The GREEN MASK

Mystery Men Comics #24 (Jul 1941, Mile High copy); **#25** (Aug 1941); **#26** (Sep 1941, Mile High copy); **#27** (Oct 1941, Mile High copy)

ALL COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

Mystery Men Comics #28 (Nov 1941, Mile High copy); #29 (Dec 1941, Mile High copy); #30 (Jan 1942); #31 (Feb 1942, Mile High copy)

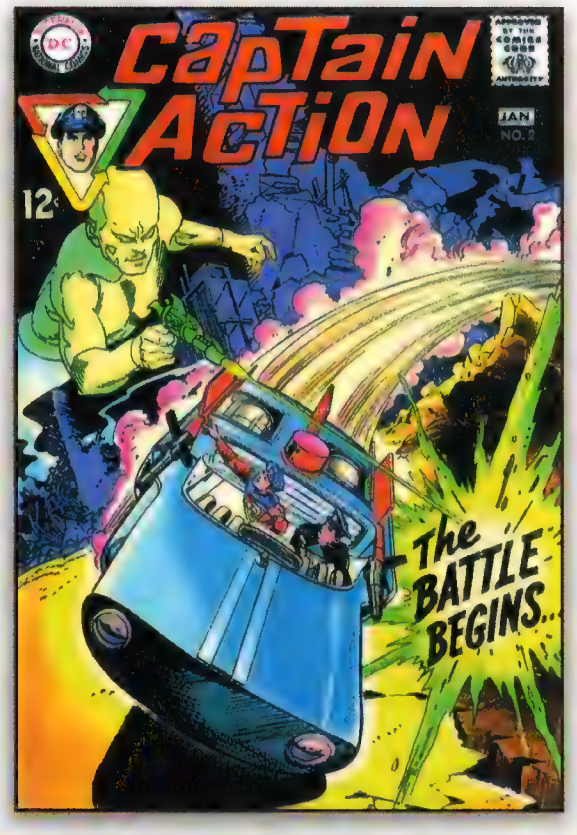
ALL COVERS COURTESY THE JON BERK COLLECTION

CAPTAIN ACTION

Gil Kane slips in a plug for Ideal's Silver Streak, Captain Action's version of the Batmobile, on the cover of **Captain Action** #2 (Dec 1968/Jan 1969)

The late Mrs. Captain Action puts in an appearance in and on issue #4 (Apr/May 1969) thanks to Dr. Evil, her villainous father, Sigmund Freud would've loved this issue

One of the great covers of the Silver Age, **Captain Action** #3 (Feb/Mar 1969) features art by Gil Kane and Dick Giordano



The dynamic cover of **Captain Action** #5 (Jun/Jul 1969) provides even more evidence that Gil Kane's villains were truly "over the top"

CAPTAIN ACTION © 2000 DC

Justice Will Be Done

REMEMBERING DC'S CAPTAIN ACTION

Autumn 1968 wasn't exactly the best time to launch a new superhero title, especially at DC Comics. The *Batman* TV show had gone off the air earlier in the year, and the carnage from the post-Batmania boom was enormous. Comics publishers were dropping left and right — ACG, King, Milson, and Tower had given up the ghost; Charlton's superhero line had come to an abrupt end; and even the once-dominant Dell was on its last legs.

By Dave Blanchard

DC wasn't doing so well, either. The company launched no fewer than 10 hero-based adventure titles in 1967-68; all of them were canceled by 1969.

Consider this as well: Throughout the entire Silver Age (1956-70), DC never launched a superhero comic in its own title without first test-marketing it somewhere, usually in *Showcase* or *Brave & Bold* (Doom Patrol got started in *My Greatest Adventure*, and Plastic Man tested the waters in the *House Of Mystery* feature Dial H for Hero). Never, that is, except for Captain Action. Since the comic book based on Ideal's doll for boys (what the toy industry now calls "action figures"), one could reasonably conclude that it was DC's deal with the toymaker, rather than overwhelming faith in its new comic book, that led it to launch *Captain Action* on the strength of its name recognition alone.

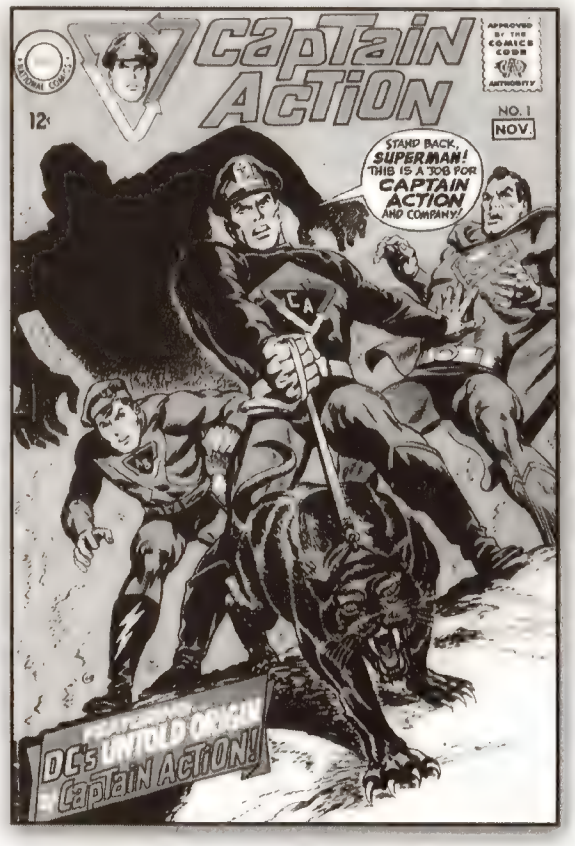
Introduced in 1966, the good captain boasted a gimmick no other toy then or since has been able to match: He could change into the costumes of the greatest heroes in comics history. Ideal's initial release of Captain Action featured the costumes of nine characters, which were sold separately with their own accessories: Batman, Superman, Aquaman, Captain America, Sgt. Fury, Flash Gordon, The Phantom, Steve Canyon, and the Lone Ranger.

The gimmick was so perfect for Silver Age kids that by 1967, Ideal had come out with four more costumes for Captain Action: Spider-Man, The Green Hornet, Buck Rogers, and Tonto. But that was just for starters: A sidekick for Cap, his son Action Boy, was also introduced, along with three junior-hero costumes: Robin, Aqualad, and Superboy. A blue-skinned villain from Alpha Centuran — Dr. Evil — also made his debut that year. And to round things off, Ideal even had a line of four super-heroine "posing dolls," separate from the Captain Action line: Batgirl, Supergirl, Wonder Woman, and Mera.

Having multiple identities is a cool gimmick if you're a doll, but it's a bit tougher to pull off if you're a comic book star expected to pull your own weight (especially since DC would never be able to acquire all the rights to the characters it didn't own). Obviously, the comic book Cap would have to make do with just his own costume, and leave the impersonations to Rich Little.

Captain Action #1 debuted with an October/November 1968 cover date, and DC put its A-team on the book, naming no less than his super-ness Mort Weisinger as editor (making it, in fact, the first all-new title he had launched since *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane* way back at the dawn of the Silver Age). Weisinger put together a top-notch creative team: boy-genius and Legion scribe Jim Shooter, and the legendary Wally Wood, fresh off his Tower comics stint. And to grease the wheels a bit more, Superman himself put in a gratuitous cameo in the first issue.

CAPTAIN ACTION © 2000 DC


Captain Action
12¢
NO. 1
NOV.
STAND BACK, SUPERMAN! THIS IS A JOB FOR CAPTAIN ACTION AND COMPANY!
DC's UNTOLD ORIGIN OF Captain Action!

Irv Novick, illustrator of such DC features as Captain Storm and Captain Cloud, adds another captain to his portfolio with the cover of Captain Action #1 (Oct/Nov 1968)

Shooter and Wood wasted no time with frills; the story gets off to a rollicking start with an origin tale that carries echoes of the Golden Age origins of the Blue Beetle, Captain Marvel, and Hawkman. Archeologist Clive Arno uncovers an ancient chest of coins imprinted with the faces of various gods from every mythology that ever was (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Japanese, Hindu, Babylonian, Aztec, etc.). Arno and his assistant, Krellik, discover a Lost City, where all the ancient gods had once paused to rest and imbue their powers into coins before moving on to another world to oversee. Since Captain Action wasn't going to be able to adopt the powers and costumes of other heroes like the doll could, Shooter decided to give him all the powers of the gods instead, which wasn't too shabby a consolation prize.

CAPTAIN ACTION PRICES
(GD, FN, NM values rounded to the nearest dollar from *Overstreet Price Guide* #30)

#1	$10	$29	$95
#2	$6	$18	$60
#3	$6	$18	$60
#4	$5	$14	$45
#5	$6	$18	$60

Back in the present day, Krellik and Arno discuss what to do with the coins. Krellik, having no imagination at all, decides to take over the world. Arno, having even less imagination, decides to be a superhero. The two of them begin an epic battle, with each of them possessing about half of the coins. Cap easily convinces his son Carl to tip the odds in their favor by adopting the super-identity of Action Boy. Being outnumbered, Krellik manages to escape, carrying the battle over into the following issue.

AND AT DR. EVIL'S GESTURE, THE OPEN SKY IS FILLED WITH IMAGES--OF A BABY CRYING, A YOUTH AT PLAY...A MAN GROWN TO MATURITY, AND A MAN GROWN OLD AND THEN THE FULL CYCLE AGAIN...
LOOK, AND LOOK WELL!
IS IT ANCESTRAL MEMORIES YOU ARE SEEING?
NO! THIS IS THE PLANET EARTH, A PLANET OF LIFE, OF YOUTH, OF GROWTH AND VITALITY! THIS IS WHAT I OFFER YOU!
IS NOT LIFE ON EARTH A NEW BEGINNING, PREFERABLE TO A WANING EXISTENCE ON ALPHA CENTURA?
YES!!
IS NOT THE PROMISE OF A SUSTAINED VIGOR, A THRUSTING LIFE-FORCE, BETTER THAN GRUMBLING SURVIVAL?
YES!
IS NOT THE STRONG COURSING OF LIFE BETTER THAN THE SLOW EBBING OF MIND AND ENERGY?
YES!
IS NOT PERPETUITY PREFERABLE TO OBLIVION?
YES!
YES!!

Dr. Evil stirs up an appreciation for George Bernard Shaw among his fellow Alpha Centurans as seen in Captain Action #4 (Apr/May 1969, panels 3 & 4, page 5

Captain Action #2 (December 1968/January 1969) picks up where the first issue left off, with one very important difference: Gil Kane took over as pencil artist, with Wood still supplying the inks. Kane's pencil work on issue #2 was positively crackling with electricity (with Wood matching him beautifully with the inks), but it was not Shooter's most inspired moment as a writer. Basically, the story is just one long fight scene. Stay tuned, though — the best was about to come.

With the third issue (February/March 1969), Kane took over as writer, and unleashed on an unsuspecting public a "cosmic head-trip" storyline the likes of which DC had never seen before. Kane's assumption of the writer's task was coincident with Weisinger's leaving the book, after only two issues. DC brought in another big gun to replace Weisinger — no less than the architect of the Silver Age himself, Julius Schwartz.

Kane's first task was to work Ideal's Dr. Evil doll into the storyline somehow. As described in the Ideal ads, Dr. Evil was a blue-skinned alien from Alpha Centura, with a human disguise "to hide his evil deeds." Kane took that germ of an idea, and hit on the notion of having Dr. Evil start out as a good guy, Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Stefan Tracy. Not only was he a purely altruistic do-gooder, but Tracy also happened to be the father of Captain Action's late wife, Kathryn, as well as Action Boy's grandfather. Pretty high emotional stakes!

Captain Action #3 boasts an absolutely stunning Kane & Giordano picture of Cap cradling his wounded son in his arms in the midst of a ravaged city, rain pouring down on them, lightning crackling in the distance, screaming to the heavens, "Hear me, Dr. Evil! Justice will be done! I vow it!" Kane must've liked the sound of that line — "Justice will be done!" — because he had Cap use it (or its variation, "Let justice be done!") over and over again. Maybe Kane liked heroes with pithy oaths, à la Green Lantern.

Anyway, Dr. Tracy is caught in a vortex-creating explosion that somehow transforms him into a cosmically conscious and thoroughly amoral being who takes on the name Dr. Evil. Doc promptly begins plotting to speed Earth along the path to the next stage of evolution, namely, the same kind of blue-skinned Alpha Centuran that he has become. His plan is a bit murky, but it involves worldwide destruction, which quickly draws Cap and Action Boy's attention.

Dr. Evil believes himself to be outside and above humanity, so when Cap catches up to him, Doc spares no expense (or breath) in letting Cap know all the failings of the human race. Doc is no mere blowhard world-conqueror in the Lex Luthor or Dr. Doom mode; heavily inspired by playwright George Bernard Shaw, Kane imbues Dr. Evil's speeches with the kind of rambling invective Shaw used to great effect in the play *Man and Superman*. Cap, on the other hand, is cut more in the straightforward John Broome-ish Green Lantern mold, and he frequently interrupts Dr. Evil's soliloquies with powerful upper-

cuts. Obviously finding it difficult to harangue humanity with all those smacks to his jaw, Dr. Evil exits stage left, promising to return.

Dr. Evil makes good on his promise in issue #4 (April/May 1969). The story opens with a cosmically psychedelic journey by Dr. Evil that finds him seeking out the dying planet Alpha Centura, "the cradle of all creation," whose inhabitants all look pretty much like Dr. Evil with their brains clearly visible at the top of their exposed blue scalps. Finding that this society is on the brink of collapse due to complete exhaustion, Dr. Evil determines to lead them to Earth, whose youth and vitality will renew the Alpha Centurans… and of course, Dr. Evil plans to rule the remade Earth.

Frustrated by Cap's constantly outwitting him, Dr. Evil decides to reanimate the "frozen-energy after-essence" of Kathryn Arno — Cap's deceased wife — to distract Cap long enough that Dr. Evil can take over the world. However, in one of the neatest touches of the whole series, Dr. Evil himself is overcome with emotion at seeing the woman who once was his own daughter brought back to pseudo-life. Interestingly, Kathryn is the only woman in any of the five issues who gets so much as a dialogue balloon — and of course, she's dead.

Ultimately, the Alpha Centurans catch on to Doc's nastiness and chase him away from Earth, after sharing a bit more Shaw-inspired philosophy: "The human race of Earth… a young, vital life-force — must work out its own destiny!"

Finding himself exiled from Earth, Dr. Evil tosses off a few shots at his birthplace: "I have no hatred for you… indeed, I have no feeling at all toward you, save that you are an outmoded evolutionary step! … Humanity is a blemish upon nature… and I shall remove it!" Whew! That's some exit line. Unfortunately, Dr. Evil would never be seen again (although if you look real hard, you'll see him on the cover of DC's *Zero Hour* #2, published in 1994).

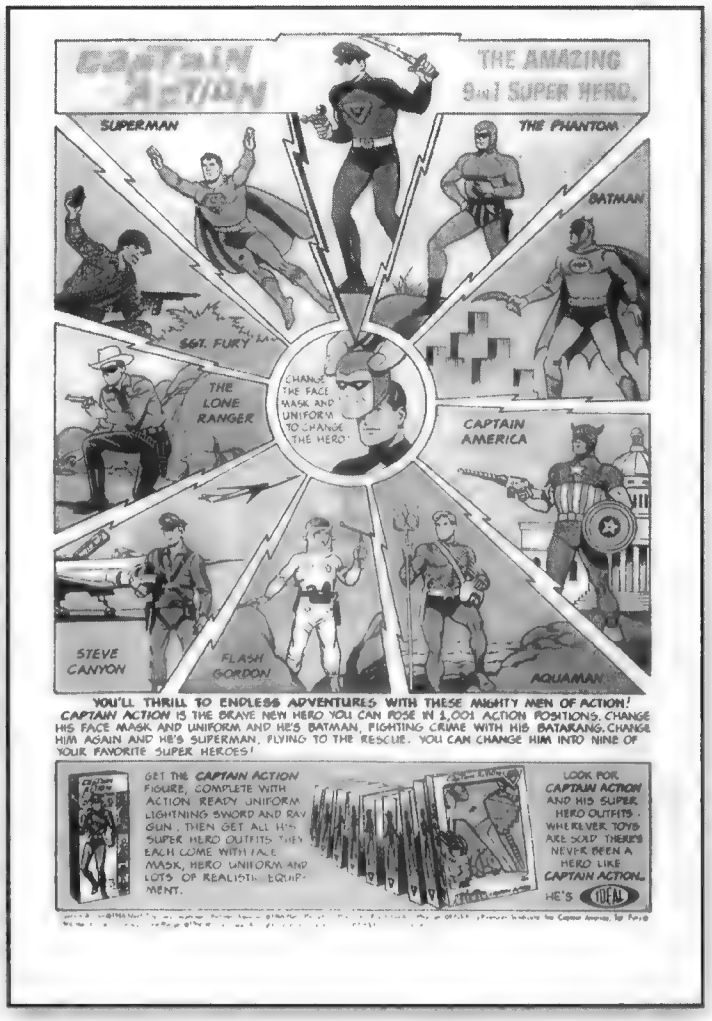
Captain Action #5 (June/July 1969) is a bit of a let-down, with the focus on Matthew Blackwell, a fascist demagogue bent on taking over the government, by whatever means necessary. Turns out Blackwell has a horrible split-personality, à la Marvel's Green Goblin, and he's also the father of Carl Arno's buddy, Johnny. Blackwell's plans to take over the country ultimately fail, of course, but inevitably lead to personal tragedy. Cap and Action Boy are basically just guest-stars in this story, which unfortunately was the final issue. (It's been suggested that DC's contract with Ideal was in fact just for five issues, and since Ideal had stopped selling its Captain Action dolls, renewing the license to publish more issues of the comic book probably didn't seem like such a great idea).

Still, though its time on the spinracks was a brief one, *Captain Action* developed into one of the most refreshingly flamboyant comic books of the late Silver Age, and remains one of the best displays of the late, great Gil Kane's talents, both writing and drawing. Not too bad for a doll comic.

And the best news for Captain Action fans is that after a 30-year hiatus, Playing Mantis (www.playingmantis.com) recently re-introduced Captain Action, Dr. Evil, and Kid Action (a new name for Action Boy) action figures to toy stores throughout the U.S. While rights to the major DC and Marvel characters are not presently available, Playing Mantis has re-released the Lone Ranger and Tonto costumes, and developed some new disguises as well: Kato, to pair with Green Hornet; Ming The Merciless, to square off against Flash Gordon; and Kabai Singh, to bedevil the Phantom.

Playing Mantis hopes to continue adding hero and villain characters, and reportedly plans to release Speed Racer uniform sets some time in 2000. Seems you just can't keep a good doll down!

Dave Blanchard lives with his wife and two daughters in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.


captain action
THE AMAZING 9-in-1 SUPER HERO.
SUPERMAN
THE PHANTOM
BATMAN
SGT. FURY
THE LONE RANGER
CHANGE THE FACE MASK AND UNIFORM TO CHANGE THE HERO!
CAPTAIN AMERICA
STEVE CANYON
FLASH GORDON
AQUAMAN
YOU'LL THRILL TO ENDLESS ADVENTURES WITH THESE MIGHTY MEN OF ACTION! CAPTAIN ACTION IS THE BRAVE NEW HERO YOU CAN POSE IN 3,001 ACTION POSITIONS. CHANGE HIS FACE MASK AND UNIFORM AND HE'S BATMAN, FIGHTING CRIME WITH HIS BATARANG. CHANGE HIM AGAIN AND HE'S SUPERMAN, FLYING TO THE RESCUE. YOU CAN CHANGE HIM INTO NINE OF YOUR FAVORITE SUPER HEROES!
GET THE CAPTAIN ACTION FIGURE, COMPLETE WITH ACTION READY UNIFORM LIGHTNING SWORD AND RAY GUN. THEN GET ALL HIS SUPER HERO OUTFITS THEY EACH COME WITH FACE MASK, HERO UNIFORM AND LOTS OF REALISTIC EQUIPMENT.
LOOK FOR CAPTAIN ACTION AND HIS SUPER HERO OUTFITS. WHEREVER TOYS ARE SOLD THERE'S NEVER BEEN A HERO LIKE CAPTAIN ACTION. HE'S IDEAL

"FLOATING.. FLOATING.. WHY CAN'T I FEEL ANYTHING? WHAT IS THIS EMPTY VOID I'M IN...? I MUST THINK CONCENTRATE... WHERE AM I? WHY AM I HERE?—WHO AM I?...BUT. NOW I REMEMBER! I AM DR. EVIL... I AM IN THE NETHER-DIMENSION THAT EXISTS BEHIND ALL UNIVERSES—AND I'M HERE BECAUSE OF.. CAPTAIN ACTION!"
"I MUST TAKE HOLD OF MYSELF. FIND A PLACE TO WORK. WHERE I CAN PUT MY PLANS INTO OPERATION AGAIN! THE UNIVERSE IS GOING INTO ITS SECOND PHASE"
"THE PHASE OF MIND... AND IN THE NAME OF INTELLECT, I WILL MAKE EARTH A PART OF THAT PHASE"
"ONLY CAPTAIN ACTION STANDS IN MY WAY! HE MUST BE DESTROYED!"

Full page comic book advertisement for the Captain Action doll "The Amazing 9-in-1 superhero!" circa 1966. Note the prominent placement of the Batman costume in the lower panel.

Dr. Evil embarks on one of the first 'cosmic head-trips' ever seen in a DC comic brilliantly drawn for the splash page of Captain Action #4 (Apr/May 1969).

The Comic Book That

The story of the most

BY FERENC MORTON SZASZ

Fifty years ago, Democratic incumbent Harry S. Truman defeated Republican challenger Thomas E. Dewey in what is still the most dramatic presidential election of the century. (1)

From the onset, all opinion polls showed Dewey with a commanding lead. Three weeks before the election, *Newsweek* could not find a single reporter who thought Truman had a chance. (2) A *New York Times* survey of reporters on the Dewey train came to the same conclusion. Only the president and a cadre of loyal supporters remained optimistic. When the final vote was tabulated—24, 179, 345 for Truman vs. 21, 991, 291 for Dewey (303-189 in the electoral college), the Republicans were stunned. Later pollsters discovered that they had stopped taking surveys a month too early. Approximately 14 percent of the nation's voters had waited until the last two weeks of the campaign to make their decision. For the Democrats, the election became a romantic's dream. Truman campaign advisor Clark Clifford termed it a "mythic event." (3)

Unlike the Franklin D. Roosevelt-Dewey contest four years earlier, the 1948 election faced no wartime shortages of metal, newsprint, ink, or graphic artists. Thus, both parties produced a vast array of gimcrack political paraphernalia: buttons, badges, booklets, pamphlets, flyers, statues, banners, posters and songs. There were even Truman and Dewey neckties. (4)

HERE WE ARE IN WASHINGTON, HARRY. IT'S A FAR CRY FROM THE FARM TO THE U. S. SENATE!
YES, THERE'S A BIG JOB AHEAD, BESS, BUT I'LL WORK NIGHT AND DAY TO DO IT RIGHT!

One month before the election, GOP officials estimated that they planned to distribute between ten and twelve million pieces of campaign literature; the Democrats placed theirs at about nine million. (5) Approximately one third of the Democrat's campaign literature consisted of a single item: a sixteen-page, four-color comic book campaign biography entitled: *The Story of Harry S. Truman*. It first appeared on October 9, 1948. The Democratic National Committee (known as "the DNC") announced that it planned to distribute about three million copies of the book through its various state committees. A DNC spokesman told reporters that this was the first time a national campaign had ever drawn on the comic book format for a presidential biography. (7)

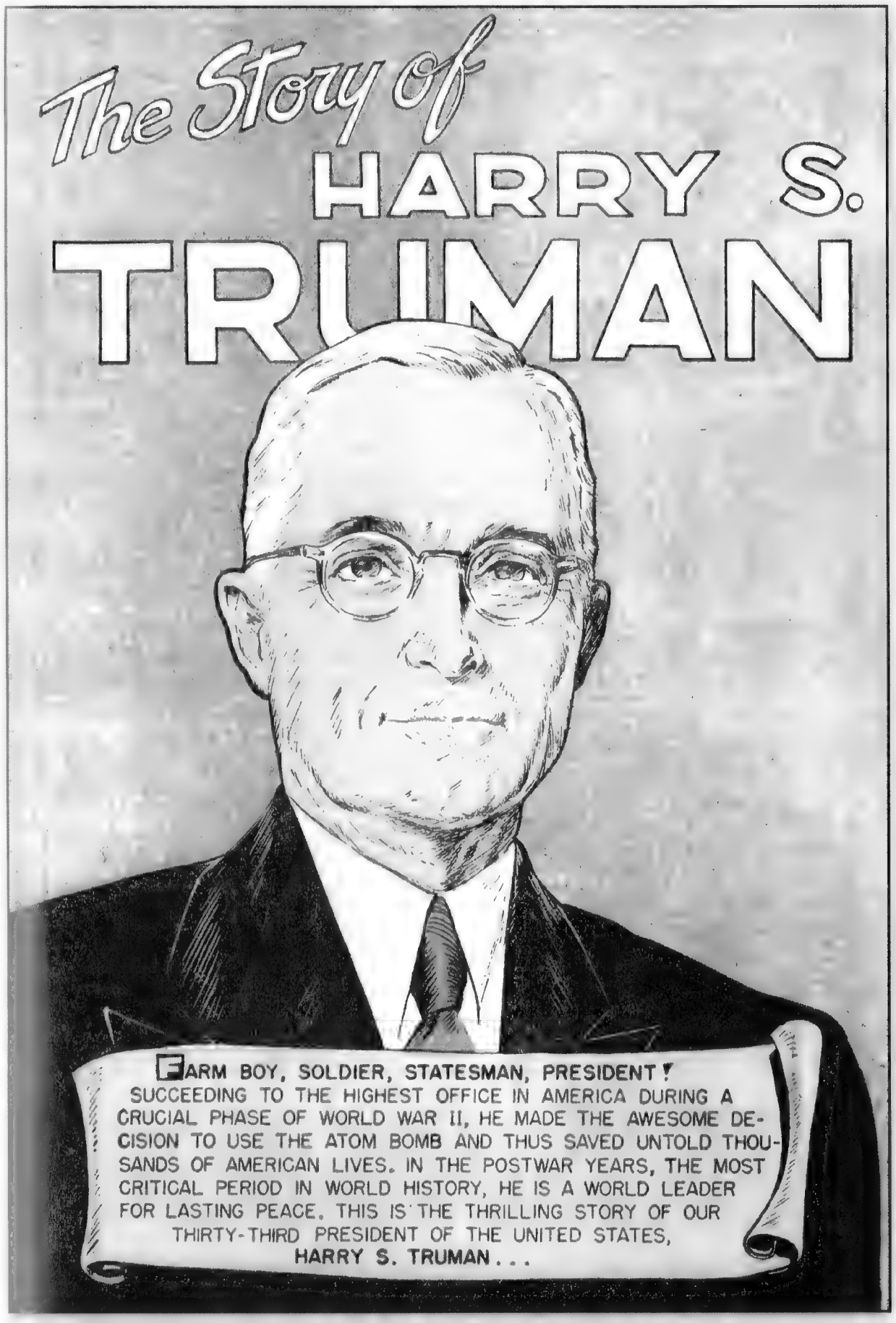
The Story of Harry S. Truman appeared at the perfect time—October, 1948—to have maximum influence on American politics. The colorful, simplistic picture-and-text format proved an ideal way to reach the groups the Democrats had to capture to remain in office. Although no academic study of the 1948 election even mentions it, *The Story of Harry S. Truman* was the most important book ever published in America. (8)

Background

In 1948, the Democrats needed all the help they could get, for their postwar problems seemed legion. Not only did the party lose the 1946 mid-term elections to the Republicans, it was riven by numerous factions: Southern conservatives who objected to Truman's Civil Rights program and eventually withdrew to back Strom Thurmond and the splinter Dixiecrats; Northern Liberals who objected to Truman's "get tough" policy with the Soviet Union and bolted to back Henry A. Wallace and the Progressive Party; and a hearty "Draft Eisenhower" (really, "Dump Truman") campaign that did not cease until the eve of the Democratic Convention itself. Even Eleanor Roosevelt held back from endorsing

Changed The Nation!

important book ever published in America!


The Story of
HARRY S.
TRUMAN
FARM BOY, SOLDIER, STATESMAN, PRESIDENT!
SUCCEEDING TO THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN AMERICA DURING A CRUCIAL PHASE OF WORLD WAR II, HE MADE THE AWESOME DECISION TO USE THE ATOM BOMB AND THUS SAVED UNTOLD THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN LIVES. IN THE POSTWAR YEARS, THE MOST CRITICAL PERIOD IN WORLD HISTORY, HE IS A WORLD LEADER FOR LASTING PEACE. THIS IS THE THRILLING STORY OF OUR THIRTY-THIRD PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, HARRY S. TRUMAN...

Truman until the very last minute.

Fortunately for the President, he had a brilliant political advisor in fellow Missourian Clark Clifford, perhaps the last of the old-time campaign managers of the Jim Farley mold. In November, 1947, Clifford helped draft a memorandum of strategy that proved astonishingly accurate. (9) The party had to reach out to those groups who had benefited most from the New Deal, he said: farmers, union members, veterans, and African-Americans. Even more important, the President had to take his message to the people at large. (10)

An essential part of this strategy involved changing Truman's speaking style. Cut from a different piece of social cloth than his predecessor, Truman was seldom effective in reading prepared speeches. He usually lost his audience at an early stage and seemed to drone on endlessly. Clifford recommended that Truman try speaking extemporaneously from note cards, a strategy he first applied at the April 17 annual convention of newspaper editors in Washington. It worked well. Later, Truman even spoke on radio utilizing only note cards. This contrived informality allowed him to highlight his down-to-earth approach to the nation's problems.

The heart of Clifford's plan, however, involved bringing the President's message to the American people. In June, Truman traveled to the West Coast to accept an honorary degree from the University of California at Berkeley. He could have flown but decided instead to go by train and campaign along the way. Joking about the "non political" nature of his journey, he made 76 speeches in 18 states, the vast majority from the rear platform of his railway car. In spite of a few blunders, the trip was a success. In mid September, he

The printing firm of Malcolm T. Ayer was hired to produce 3 million copies of The Story of Harry S. Truman

FLASH! THE SAD WORD HAS JUST REACHED US THAT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, DIED SUDDENLY THIS AFTERNOON.
OH, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US NOW? HOW CAN ANYONE EVER TAKE HIS PLACE?

repeated it in earnest. This time Truman traveled over 21,000 miles and delivered 275 speeches in a "whistle stop" campaign that reminded old timers of William Jennings Bryan's 1896 crusade.

By all accounts, Truman proved marvelously effective in these platform speeches. Rarely mentioning his opponent, he leveled a constant barrage against the Republican-dominated 80th "do nothing" Congress. The crowds increased steadily as millions of people gathered to see the president "give 'em hell." Historian Irwin Ross has termed these performances "political vaudeville." (11)

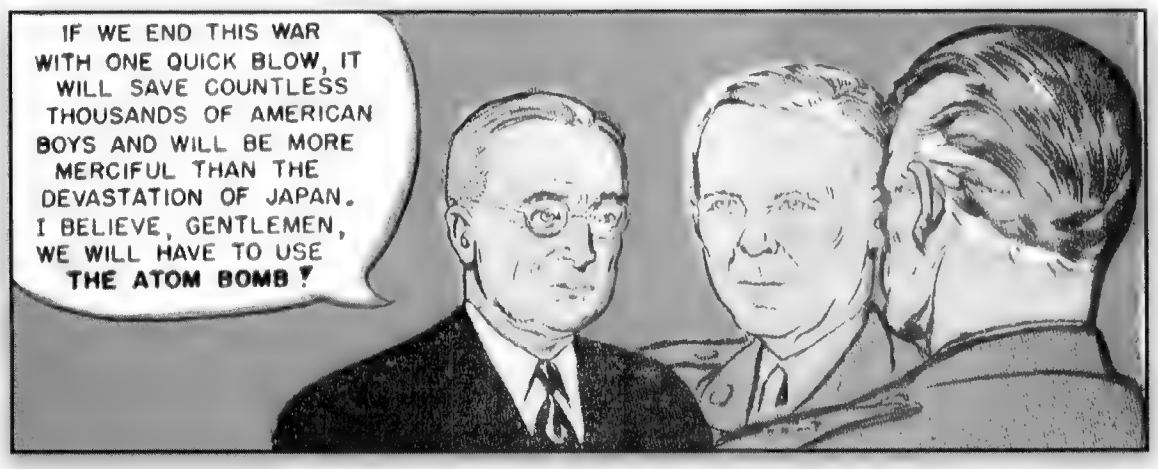
In retrospect, the 1948 campaign stood at the crossroads of modern political history. It was the last whistle-stop railroad crusade before the era of convenient jet travel. It was also the last presidential campaign before the advent of modern communications, especially television. Although both parties held their nomination conventions in Philadelphia so as to accommodate the TV cameras, only about 500,000 people owned sets in 1948. The world of "sound bites" lay far in the future. In 1948, the best way to reach a mass audience lay either with radio or with countless personal appearances.

The Lowly Comic Book...

But there was another way to reach a mass audience in 1948: the lowly comic book. A unique product of national popular culture, the comic book emerged in the mid 1930s from two sources: the newspaper comic strip and pulp fiction. After *Action* #1 hit the newsstands in June, 1938—the first appearance of *Superman*—the comic book began to rise dramatically in sales. Editors soon produced a bevy of rival superheroes, the most famous of whom were the Batman, Flash, Sub-Mariner, Hawkman, Torch, Captain Marvel, and Wonder Woman.

In addition, the industry responded to the rise of fascism by creating a related sub-genre: the patriotic hero. Although some of these characters wore costumes, few possessed genuine "superpowers." Yet all of them battled "for America" against a variety of political and social evils. There were about sixty of these war-era patriotic heroes, bearing such names as: Shield, Minuteman, Mr. America, Spirit of Old Glory, The Patriot, Captain Daring, Captain Battle, Captain Freedom, Pat Parker War Nurse, Commando Yank, Man of War, The Eagle, U.S. Jones, The Spirit of '76, The Sentinel, The Defender, Mr. Liberty (later Major Liberty), The American Crusader, Pat Patriot, Captain Victory, Miss Victory, Citizen Smith, Yankee Doodle Jones, Captain Courageous, The Lone Warrior, V-Man, Liberty Belle, and Captain Valiant. The two most famous were probably Uncle Sam and Captain America. (12)

The presence of so many young men and women on military bases proved ideal for comics distribution. Not only did the soldiers have considerable time on their hands, plus a little spending money, their reading skills had often been curtailed by depression-era schooling. Former Army officer—and later 1948 Truman speech writer—Frank D. Kelly recalled that the men under his command read comic books more than anything else. (13) Circulation figures bore this out. In 1946, the comic industry produced c. 45


IF WE END THIS WAR WITH ONE QUICK BLOW, IT WILL SAVE COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN BOYS AND WILL BE MORE MERCIFUL THAN THE DEVASTATION OF JAPAN. I BELIEVE, GENTLEMEN, WE WILL HAVE TO USE THE ATOM BOMB!

million books a month or c. 540 million comics a year. (14) Moreover, each comic had between four and five additional readers. (15) One 1947 observer described this time period as "the comic book age." (16)

In addition, several corporations had also begun to utilize comic books to sell their products. Ford, Westinghouse, Esso, the National Broadcasting Company, and later the U.S. Navy, used them. General Electric's 1948 "give away" *The Story of the Atom* had a print run of three million copies. (17)

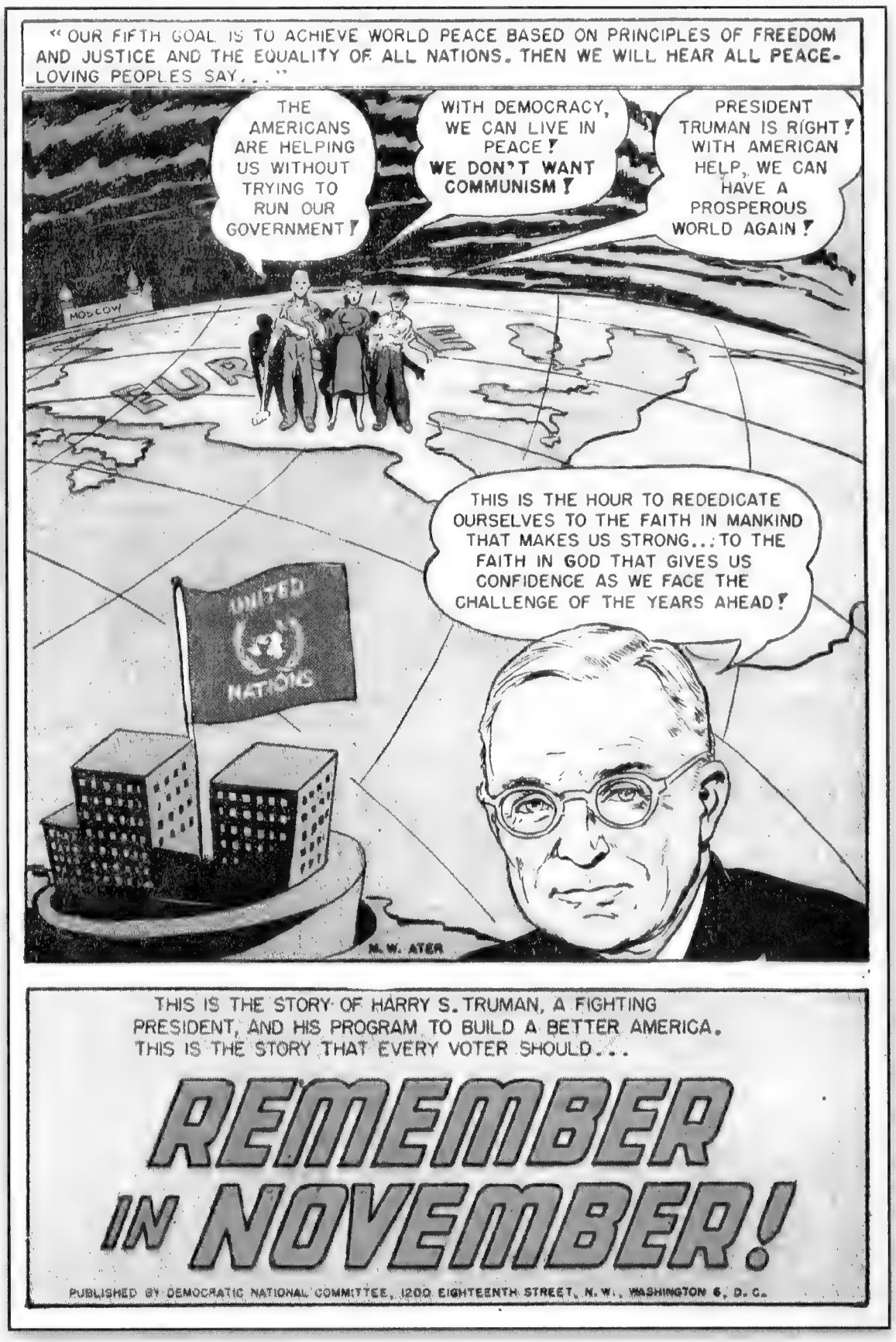
Postwar political candidates had begun to draw on comics as well. In 1946, several New York hopefuls, including the mayor of New York City and Congressman Jacob Javits, had distributed cartoon flyers. The first candidate to actually use a comic book in his campaign was Dwight M. Smith, Jr. An ex-FBI man, Smith ran in a Republican primary for sheriff in Truman's own Jackson County, Missouri. In early 1948, Smith hired a firm to create a heroic comic book biography of himself that he dropped on 50,000 doorsteps. He won by more than all his opponents combined. (18)

About the same time, a DNC staffer—no one can now remember who—hired the Washington, D.C. printing firm of Malcolm T. Ayer to create and publish *The Story of Harry S. Truman*. A 3-million print run reduced the individual cost to between one and two cents each. Thus, DNC expenses for the book were in the neighborhood of $30,000. (19) Although not much in today's terms, this was a tidy sum in 1948. Since everyone assumed that Dewey would win, DNC fund raisers had a hard time soliciting contributions. DNC officials often had to scramble to pay for Truman's radio time. In one famous incident, the President had to make a special plea for funds to get his campaign train out of Union Station. (20) It was not easy to get the Democratic message out to the average American in 1948.

The Book Itself

The Story of Harry S. Truman certainly helped in this crusade. In appearance, it resembled both a standard comic book and a standard campaign biography. In sixteen pages it introduced Truman as a man with abundant virtues and no discernible faults. The reader learns of Truman's pioneer grandparents and his farm youth, where he plowed "the straight [furrow] in the county!" Truman later sailed to France as Captain of Battery D, 129th Field Artillery "to fight for freedom." When he returned, he opened a clothing business, only to see it fail in the early 1920s. "Everyone is suffering, Eddie... " he says, "You'd think the Republican administration would do something to help small businessmen!" Shortly afterwards Truman returns home to announce, "Bess, the boys at the Legion meeting tonight were talking about having me run for county judge... as a Democrat!"

In 1934, he entered the Senate "following the Hoover administration's catastrophic depression" and through the Truman Committee saved American taxpayers "over a billion dollars." When the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, he volunteered again to serve in the Army but a general told him he could best help the Allies by remaining in the Senate. After the death of Roosevelt cat-


" OUR FIFTH GOAL IS TO ACHIEVE WORLD PEACE BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE AND THE EQUALITY OF ALL NATIONS. THEN WE WILL HEAR ALL PEACE-LOVING PEOPLES SAY..."
THE AMERICANS ARE HELPING US WITHOUT TRYING TO RUN OUR GOVERNMENT!
WITH DEMOCRACY, WE CAN LIVE IN PEACE! WE DON'T WANT COMMUNISM!
PRESIDENT TRUMAN IS RIGHT! WITH AMERICAN HELP, WE CAN HAVE A PROSPEROUS WORLD AGAIN!
MOSCOW
EUROPE
THIS IS THE HOUR TO REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE FAITH IN MANKIND THAT MAKES US STRONG...TO THE FAITH IN GOD THAT GIVES US CONFIDENCE AS WE FACE THE CHALLENGE OF THE YEARS AHEAD!
UNITED NATIONS
M. W. AYER
THIS IS THE STORY OF HARRY S. TRUMAN, A FIGHTING PRESIDENT, AND HIS PROGRAM TO BUILD A BETTER AMERICA. THIS IS THE STORY THAT EVERY VOTER SHOULD...
REMEMBER IN NOVEMBER!
PUBLISHED BY DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE, 1200 EIGHTEENTH STREET, N. W., WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

apulted him into the presidency, he decided to end the war with "one quick blow." Although Congress passed the Taft-Hartley bill over his veto, he put up a "last ditch fight in defense of labor."

The Story of Harry S. Truman also reflected the heroic comic book genre of the age. Truman, of course, hardly fit the model of a Superman or Captain Marvel. He had no secret identity and no superhero would ever have gone bankrupt, regardless of who held power in Washington. But the Story did distinctly echo the genre of "patriotic hero" along the lines of Uncle Sam, the Shield, or Captain America: people who had fought for the nation as best they could.

This similarly did not go unnoticed. "President Truman made a hero's appearance today in comic book format... "noted one AP writer. Indeed he did. The cover announced "the thrilling story of our 33rd president who was farm boy, soldier, statesman, President." Truman had saved "untold thousands of American lives" by his decision to use the atomic bomb. Currently he served as "a world leader for lasting peace."

The back cover shows Europe, aided by the United Nations, on the cusp of recovery; only the menacing shadow of Moscow looms in the background. The president looks directly at the reader and says:

"This is the hour to rededicate ourselves to the faith in mankind that makes us strong... to the faith in God that gives us confidence as we face the challenge of the years ahead!" The last line of the book: "Remember in November." (21)

The Republicans immediately cried foul. Any accurate biography should include references to Truman's mentor, Kansas City boss Thomas Pendergast, who later served a prison term for tax evasion, they said. (22) Republicans also claimed they would soon produce a comic book campaign biography of Dewey, but none ever appeared. Perhaps the GOP didn't have enough time—comics need a two to three month lead period—but more likely they looked at the October polls and decided they didn't need one.

This was a mistake. The three million copies of *The Story of Harry S. Truman* reached almost as many households as Truman's famed whistle stop campaign speeches. In both message and format, the book appealed to the Democrats' four target groups: farmers, African-Americans, veterans, and labor. Farmers learned a great deal of Truman's rural Missouri boyhood; Blacks read about his voting rights plan and his crusade for federal aid to education (one panel shows a small black girl in a school setting). For veterans, the book cast Truman's W.W.I military role in a very heroic light, and most of them were avid comic book readers. So too with union members. From the late 1930s forward, the CIO had utilized the comic book format to explain its position to both members and townspeople, much to the dismay of GM executives such as Alfred Sloan. *The Story of Harry S. Truman* thus had a multi-faceted appeal.

This did not go unnoticed. After the election, a DNC spokesman observed that Truman's margin of victory—1,188,054 votes—coincided almost exactly with the number of free comic books they had distributed. (23)

The Aftermath

Both parties must have examined this issue carefully, for in 1952, each distributed comic book biographies of their candidates. The GOP produced *Dwight D. Eisenhower—Richard M. Nixon, the Choice of a Nation*... while the DNC issued two versions: *The Stevenson Story: Why Adlai Is Fitted to be President* and *A Man Named Stevenson*. Four years later, the Republicans added *Forward with Eisenhower and Nixon, 1956*. Comics do not seem to have played a role in the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon election but in 1964, Dell Publishing produced comic book biographies of both Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater as a commercial venture (cost: 12¢ each). No comic book campaign biography has appeared since. In fact, one contemporary expert has stated that political issues are "especially ill-suited to the comic book format." (24)

In a culture dominated by the visual media, that may be so. But it was certainly not true in 1948. In this postwar, pre-television age, *The Story of Harry S. Truman* filled numerous roles. It drew on the mass comic readership of the war years, the genre of the patriotic hero, and simple, picture-and-text imagery to present Harry Truman in the best possible light. The three million free copies—plus untold "second readings"—appeared in the last four weeks of the campaign, a time when they were most needed. One could make a case that *The Story of Harry S. Truman* tipped the scales in 1948. That $30,000 paid to the Malcolm W. Ayer Publishing Company may well have been the best investment that the DNC ever made.

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2. Booth Mooney, The Politicians: 1945-1960 (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 60-82.

3. Clark Clifford (with Richard Holbrooke), Counsel to the President: A Memoir (New York: Random House, 1991), 187.

4. Keith Melder, Hail to the Candidate: Presidential Campaigns from Banners to Broadcasts (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 147-48; Arthur M. Schlessinger, Jr. and Fred Israel, eds., Running for President: The Candidates and Their Images, Volume II, 1900-1992 (New York, etc. Simon and Schuster, 1994), 239-53.

5. "Truman's Life in Comic Book," New York News, Oct. 10, 1945. Newspaper copies supplied by Dennis Bilger, Archivist, from the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

6. New York Times, Oct. 10. 1948.

7. New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 10, 1948.

8. Even the two best compilations of political paraphernalia, cited in note 4, fail to mention The Story. Interestingly, they do feature the comics used in the 1952 and 1956 elections. In a similar fashion, William Miles, The Image Makers: A Bibliography of American Presidential Campaign Biographies (Methuchen, NJ and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1979) lists the 1952 and 1956 comic biographies but also neglects The Story. The book is not terribly expensive. A "good" copy sells for about $10 in today's collectors' market.

9. Clifford, Counsel to the President, 168-89.

10. Clifford, Counsel to the President, 199. See also, "How the Democratic Party Counts on Winning 1948," U.S. News and World Report, XXV (July 23, 1948): 1-13.

11. Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign: The Truman Victory of 1948, 88.

12. Michelle Nolan, "Patriotic Heroism; The Red White and Blue of WWII," Comic Book Marketplace #48 (June 1997): 13-17.

13. Jerry Robinson, The Comics: An Illustrated History of Comic Strip Art (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1974), 166. Mike Benton, Superhero Comics of the Golden Age (Dallas: Taylor Publishing, 1992), 45.

14. Interview (telephone) with Frank Kelly 17 March 1998.

15. Publisher's Weekly, Sept. 6, 1947, 1030.

16. William Moulton Marston, "Why 100,000,000 Americans Read Comics," American Scholar 13 (1944): 35.

17. American Legion Magazine, October, 1947), as cited in John A Lent, Compiler, Comic Books and Comic Strips in the United States: An International Bibliography (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), Introduction.

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19. Roy Parmenter, "More Proof of Comics' Power," Printers' Ink 224 (Sept. 10, 1948): 20.

20. Louis P. Birk, "Comic Booklets: How Comic Booklets Are Used in Advertising and Public Relations," 43; This figure was confirmed by Master Printer Buddy Ott to author, April 3, 1998.

21. Interview (telephone) with Irwin Ross, 16 March 1998. Story also heard in interview with William L. Batt, Jr. (telephone), 17 March 1998.

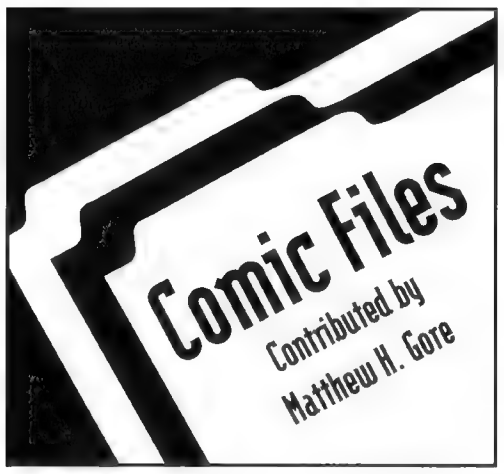
22. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 10, 1948, (AP Wirephoto). Copy from HST Archives.

23. The Story of Harry S. Truman (M. W. Ayer: Distributed by the Democratic National Committee, 1948). See also New York Mirror, Oct. 10, 1948: Washington Post, Oct. 10, 1948.

24. New York Times, Oct. 9, 1948. George Dixon, "Washington Scene," undated clipping from HST Archives. Fred .3ric Wertham, Seduction of the Innocent (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1954), 311, also took this position.

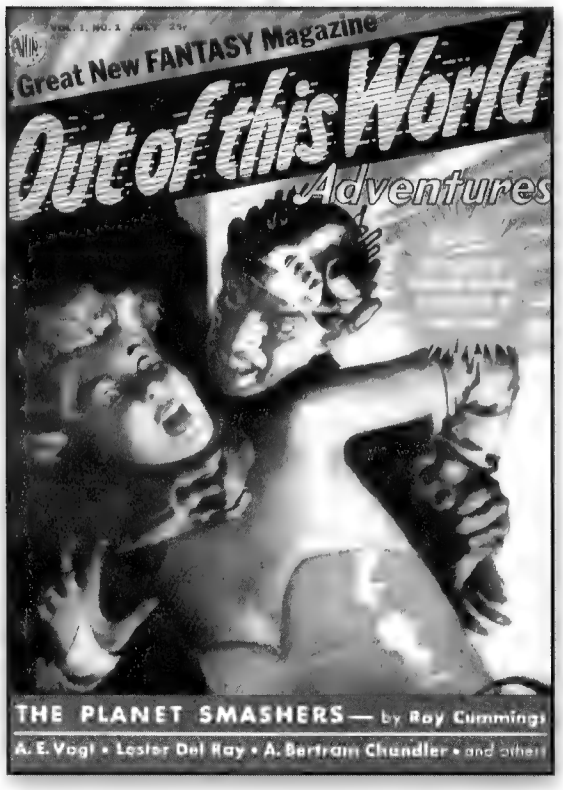
25. Mike Benton, The Comic Book in America (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1993), 157.

26. The 100 Most Important Comics of All Time (Hero Special Edition, May, 1994), 16.



Most *Comic Book Marketplace* readers are aware that there was a single issue of Avon's *Out of this World*, numbered one and cover dated June, 1950. It was, as listed in the *Guide*, a standard size comic book. But few collectors realize that Avon recycled some of their comics by binding them (sans cover) into their pulp title *Out of this World Adventures*.

There were at least four issues of this amazing pulp magazine, each with, as stated on the cover, "32 PAGES OF FANTASY STORIES ILLUSTATED IN FULL COLOR". The 32-page color section was, of course, the comic. (The second issue is incorrectly listed under the *Out of this World* comic book listing in the current *Overstreet*.)


Great New FANTASY Magazine
Out of this World
Adventures
THE PLANET SMASHERS — by Ray Cummings
A. E. Vogt • Lester Del Rey • A. Bertram Chandler • and others

Out of this World Adv. V1#1 and its TOC page. Note "Special Story Section"

Details on the four issues:

Out of this World Adventures V1, #1 (cover dated July 1950) has *Out of this World* #1 bound in.

Out of this World Adventures V1, #2 (cover dated December 1950) has *Strange Worlds* #1 bound in.

Out of this World Adventures V2, #1 (cover dated February, 1951?) is rare. I've never seen a copy but it must exist given that volume 2, #2 does. What is bound in? Perhaps some *CBM* reader with a copy can tell us so we can share the information with everyone in a future installment.

Out of this World Adventures V2, #2 (cover dated April, 1951) has *Flying Saucers* #1 bound in.

The first issue is fairly easy to come by, I've owned several copies in the last 30 years. Nice copies are a really easy sell. Issue V2#2 is slightly harder to find, I have owned two copies. The last issue, V2#2, must be fairly scarce. I've only seen it a couple of times and never for sale (or I would have bought it). I've never seen a copy of V2#1 and I have been looking for quite a long time.

Out of this World Adventures

Vol. 1, No. 1

THE PLANET-SMASHERS (Novelette).....Ray Cummings 6
If that midnight air-liner was not stopped, Venus would never see another dawn.

LETTER FROM THE STARS.....A. E. Van Vogt 25
The destiny of the universe depended on their correspondence.

OMEGA AND THE WOLF-GIRL....Lester del Rey 30
The last man had to choose between Martian monsters and Earthly beasts.

THE PUZZLE OF PRIIPIIRII.....William Tenn 42
Their key to life lay in a problem that had gone unsolved for a quarter-million years.

THE SHIPWRECKED BOGEY MAN
Lloyd Williams 83
There really was a spectre in Peter's room—but nobody would admit it.

TERROR OF THE MIST-MAIDENS (Novelette).....A. Bertram Chandler 88
Only one lone man knew how to end the war of the women on that star-world.

THE DISCORD MAKERS.....Mack Reynolds 102
Are there interplanetary invaders walking the Earth today?

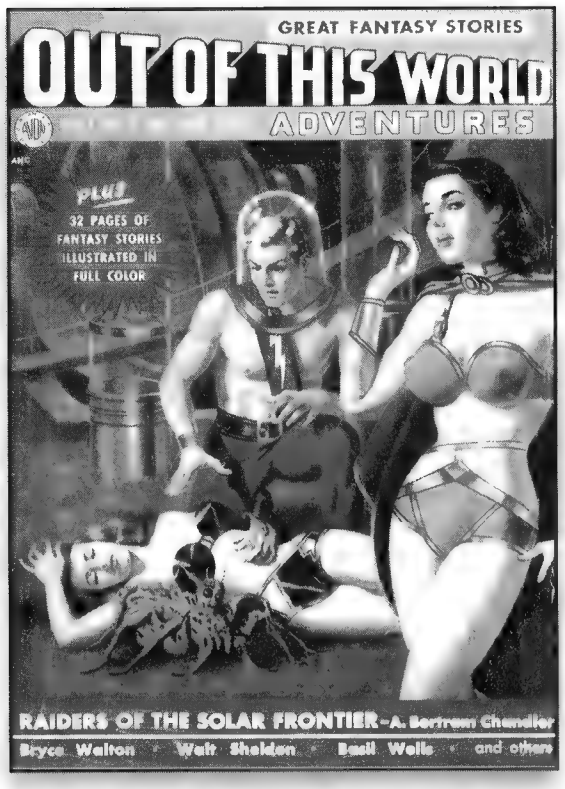
FORBIDDEN FRUIT.....Kris Neville 111
In the code of the stars, the murderer must be his own jailer.

Donald A. Wollheim
Editor

OUT OF THIS WORLD ADVENTURES, published bi-monthly by Avon Periodicals, Inc., at 119 West 57th Street, New York 19, N. Y. Copyright, 1950, by Avon Periodicals, Inc. Single copies, 25¢. The publishers do not assume responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. Names of all characters and persons appearing in the stories in this magazine are fictitious, and any resemblance to the names of actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. Printed in U.S.A.

SPECIAL STORY SECTION, ILLUSTRATED IN FULL-COLOR

LUNAR STATION.....John Michel
Illustrated by J. Kubert
THE MAN-EATING LIZARDS.....Edward Bellin
Illustrated by J. Kubert
PALLAS REBELLION.....W. Malcolm White
A short-short story
CROM THE BARBARIAN.....Gardner Fox
Illustrated by John Giunta


GREAT FANTASY STORIES
OUT OF THIS WORLD
ADVENTURES
PLUS
32 PAGES OF FANTASY STORIES ILLUSTRATED IN FULL COLOR
RAIDERS OF THE SOLAR FRONTIER - A. Bertram Chandler
Bryce Walton • Walt Sheldon • Basil Wells • and others

One of the really great things about these pulps is the fact that the table of contents pages list both writer and artist for each of the comic book stories. In the first decades of comic history, it is rare to see the writer credited and documented... making these rare pulps a comic book historian's delight!

Out of this World Adventures V1#2 and its Table of Contents page. Both the first and second issues credit artists "J. Kubert," "John Giunta," and writer "Gardner Fox"

Vol. 1, No. 2

Out of this World Adventures

PLUS

32 PAGES OF FANTASY STORIES ILLUSTRATED IN FULL COLOR

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Between Earth and the space marauders stood only Latimer's tiny world of exiled criminals.

UNDER MARTIAN SANDS.....Basil Wells 24
Jud Lee found refuge in a lost world a hundred times more deadly than the Red Planet's vengeance.

JUPITER NAPOLEON.....J. Harvey Haggard 39
Had she betrayed humanity to the conquerors from the Giant Planet?

THE CITY OF SINGING CUBES.....Bryce Walton 42
Those strange robot music-boxes held the key to Hell's symphony.

ALCHEMY.....John and Dorothy de Courcy 83
What strange magic transformed Venus just for one Earthling's benefit?

CELESTIAL LANDFALL.....Walt Sheldon 90
Those atomic supermen found themselves inexplicably helpless on that savage new world.

ALPHA CENTAURI CURTAIN CALL.....Len J. Moffatt 100
Pike Pickens put on his greatest T-V show for an audience of man-eating fiends!

MAIL FROM PLANET TERRA..... 117
(Department) Letters from our readers.

Donald A. Wollheim
Editor

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A short-short story
THE SPIDER GOD OF AKKA.....Gardner Fox
Illustrated by John Giunta

Pre-Code Collection Discovered

CALIFORNIA - Lee Hester of Palo Alto, announced the discovery of a high grade, original owner comic book collection. The 450 comics are all from the 1950-54 time period and included titles from various publishers including Ace, Atlas, ACG, Archie, Avon, DC, Dell, EC, Fawcett, Gilberton, Harvey, Headline, Hillman, Lev Gleason, Prize, Quality, Standard and Ziff-Davis.

The books range from Good to Near Mint with most in high grade. Mr. Hester said "the high level of preservation can be attributed to the fact that the comic books were originally purchased from the stands by a young soldier who sealed them in a footlocker shortly after purchase."

Lee Hester, owner of Lee's Comics, initially began purchasing the collection at his Palo Alto store in 1998. He plans to sell each comic on an individual basis on the eBay web site beginning July 17, 2000, and ending July 26.

Mr. Hester added, "I've based the reserve prices on *The Overstreet Guide*. They range from a high of $900 for a Near Mint *Batman* #62 down to $5 for a Good copy of *Classics Illustrated* #5 (HRN 60). Also, each book comes with a certificate of authenticity drawn by the legendary Jack Davis."

All the books will be previewed at the San Diego Comic Book Convention on July 20-23, 2000. The books are also on display at www.lcomics.com

CGC's "Qualified" Grade

The topic of comic book certification, and CGC in particular, has been frequently discussed in the pages of *CBM*. In the give and take, sometimes we're praised and other times we're not. After a year of staying on the sidelines, The Michael Naiman Report "Qualified VF/NM? Collectors Getting Confused" in *CBM* #77 has finally persuaded me to enter the fray.

There was some discussion here at CGC as to who should respond to this article. Finally, Steve Eichenbaum and John Maben agreed that due to my long time participation in the hobby, I should be the one to address Michael's allegations.

Michael Naiman is a bright guy, and besides, I like him. That's why it doesn't make sense to me that he'd leave out important information about the CGC Qualified grade and book(s) he mentions. Even though he spoke with me about the subject, his printed article, unfortunately, hardly shows that we spoke at all. Since instead there appears incomplete, inaccurate, and unreliable information, I'd like to address a few of his specific comments.

The title of Michael's article, "Qualified VF/NM 9.0? Collectors Getting Confused!" is pointed directly at CGC's "Qualified" grade description. He says, "Grading definitions have been mysteriously misinterpreted" and offers as proof CGC's Qualified grade. This is, at best, a misleading statement since it implies that all CGC grading is done on a Qualified basis, and that we are creating a new grading area. This is not in the least true.

So that *CBM* readers fully understand the issue at question, CGC occasionally gives books a "Qualified" grade when what otherwise would be considered a very nice book has a significant defect. We instituted the Qualified label and description at the insistence of hobby participants in the earliest months of our planning, and presented the concept at our first collector's meeting which included hobbyists like Jon Berk, Roger Longo, Dan Kramer, and Mike Dalessandro and at subsequent meetings for the next year. Even more important, he fails to mention that even though we proceeded with the hobby's encouragement, we go to great lengths to clearly indicate the book's status as a Qualified grade book.

First, all CGC Qualified books have a green label with the headline words "QUALIFIED." This clearly sets it apart visually from our blue "Universal" label, our purple "Restored" label,

and our red "Modern" label. Second, in bold letters you see that it's a qualified grade, for example: "QUALIFIED VF/NM 9.0." Third, we now place the word "INCOMPLETE" on the front and top labels of books with missing components. And last, we clearly identify the qualifying characteristics, such as "coupon clipped," or "centerfold missing."

Far from confusing a book's status, we're clarifying a situation that the market occasionally encounters. If selling in person, at a con, or in a store, the person selling the book might say "this looks NM, but the coupon is out, it doesn't affect the story, so it's a killer looking reading copy." Or something like that. In ads and catalogs I've regularly seen books listed as, "coupon clipped, otherwise VF+."

Without a Qualified label, we'd be doing a disservice to a comic that looks NM, yet has a major flaw. Some would say the primary reason people grade a comic is to set the price of it. I don't know anyone who would sell a book that looks NM but has a coupon clipped as a Fair or Poor book without mentioning its otherwise great appearance. After a description is given, the person selling the comic determines the asking price. Wouldn't we all agree that a *Flash* #6 that looks VF+ but is missing an ad page, will not sell at either the Poor or Fair Guide price? Of course... it will sell for much more.

So let's not fool ourselves, disclosure is the key. And that's precisely what the CGC green Qualified label accomplishes. We leave it to buyer and seller to determine the price. CGC has not "misinterpreted" or "changed" anything. We have given a name, and an impartial third-party opinion, to something already in place that had no name!

As an example to prove his point, Michael mentions a CGC Qualified VF+ (page missing) *Hulk* #181 offered on eBay. He makes the point that this book is common, though that's wholly beside the point. The eBay seller who listed the book, to his credit, goes the extra mile in describing it, "This book has a qualifier, since according to CGC, the book has "a page missing, does not affect story." Chances are an ad page was removed. Unfortunately, I did not even know this when the book was purchased. That is why from now on, CGC is the only way to go." The result of all this honesty, both on the part of the seller and the clear disclosure on the CGC label? A better-informed and competing audience of multiple bidders eventually brought a winning bid of over $200. Who's the loser in this transaction? Who was confused? Apparently, the only unsatisfied parties were the under-bidders.

Remember, before CGC (only four months ago) comics were sold in Mylar or poly bags. If you look around at a con, most new collectors trust the sellers. Few, if any, glance through the comic before buying it. If an unscrupulous seller wanted to take advantage of a buyer they could say a comic missing a coupon is a NM anyway without even men-

tioning the coupon. With the CGC Qualified label and a tamper evident holder the disclosure is clear, and a price can be agreed upon, as was the case with this *Hulk* #181 on eBay.

Michael refers to a "well known (and nameless) southern dealer who is irked that we are just pushing the grade." This is just plain wrong. Of the over 6,000 comics CGC has graded so far, less than 50 have been Qualified, which is under 1%. This would hardly qualify in anyone's mind as "pushing" the Qualified grade. By contrast, just over 600 comics have been designated as Restored, and based on feedback we estimate that only half were submitted by owners who were aware of the restoration! And let's face it, if CGC was motivated in the way this southern dealer implies, why wouldn't we just save ourselves a lot of effort and money and simply place such a book under a Universal label and "push the grade" to VG? Again, the accusation of ulterior motives doesn't hold. Our motive is to help the hobby. Only then will we be successful.

Speaking of success, in another place he states that CGC is "financially dependent on the kindness of a few charter member dealers." Again, this is far from accurate. Ninety percent of the major dealers in the U.S. (93 of them) are CGC Charter Members, many more than just "a few." We also have 158 Authorized member dealers (stores and dealers) and 134 Associate members (part-time dealers and collectors). Sotheby's, Greg Manning Auctions, Amazon, and eBay auctions have also embraced certification as a way of assisting both buyer and seller, and offer online direct submission forms to CGC. This list is hardly a "few" and I think it's obvious that CGC does not exist for and does not cater to any "special interest" groups inside or outside the hobby.

And after all, is it "all about the money" as Mike states? Well, businesses do need to make money, and CGC has never claimed to be a non-profit organization. Then again, last time I checked neither have any of the comic book dealers I've met. It's insulting to imply that CGC's in it for the quick buck when we've spent into the seven figures on research, development, and holder technology. Anyone who knows CGC and its management knows that they've gone out of their way to discuss the company's plans with the hobby and incorporate the resulting suggestions. The clear message has been, and will continue to be, that CGC has invested heavily in the comic book hobby and has every intention in doing its part to see the hobby flourish.

As for being a "carpet bagging service" Mark Haspel, Paul Litch and I are far from "carpet baggers." This is our hobby, too, and has been our whole lives. And I challenge anyone to dispute that John Maben, Steve Eichenbaum, Dave Stump, and Ed Cardona are the most professional and best-qualified collectibles certification management team in the world.

Are Michael's omissions inadvertent? Or is he trying to stir up controversy because he is not comfortable with the change CGC is bringing to the hobby?

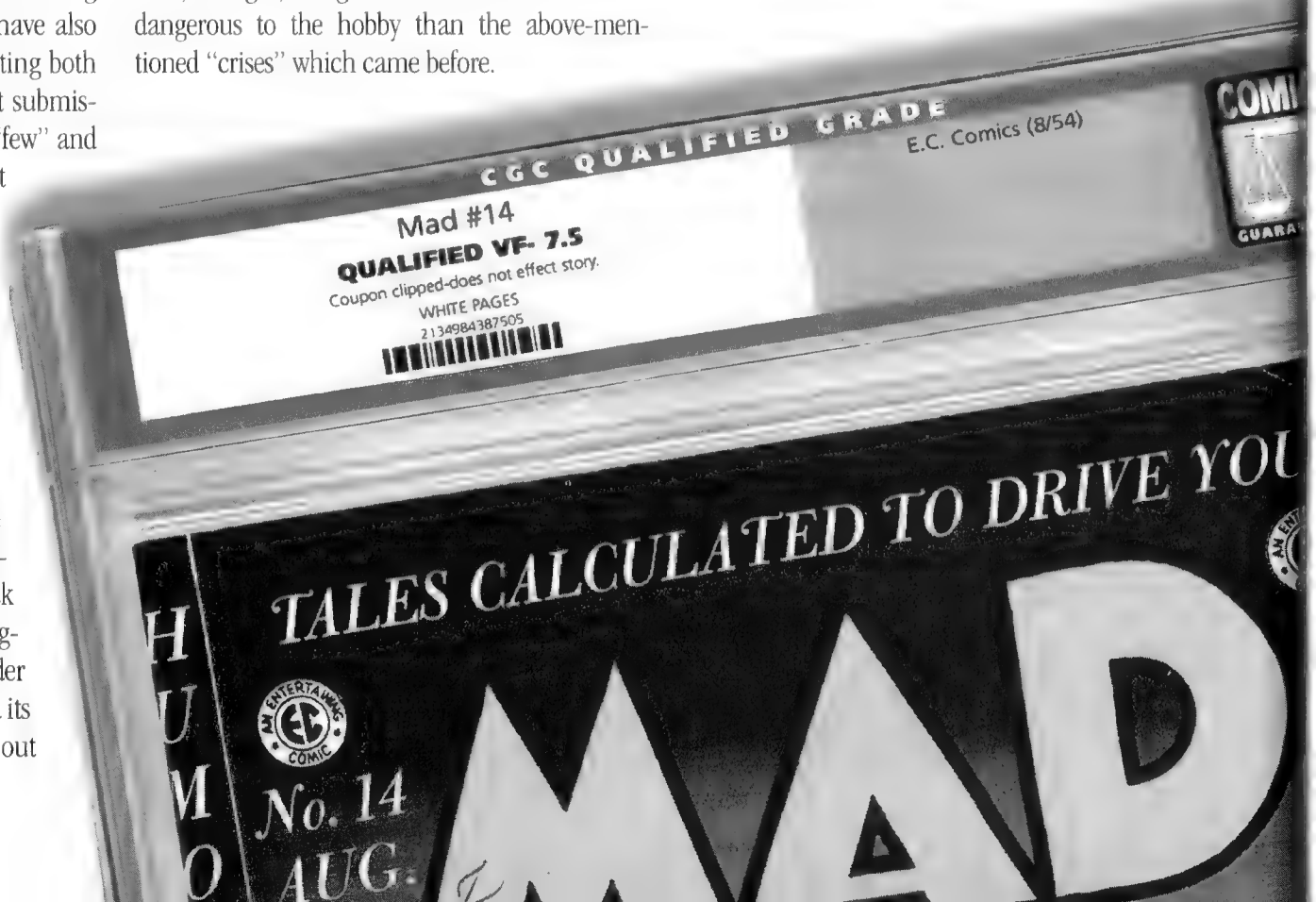
Let's face it; we in the hobby are all somewhat suspicious of change. For as long as I've been in the hobby, every time a new idea came along the Chicken Little cries of "the sky is falling!" could be heard far and wide. That's not necessarily a bad thing, so long as we keep an open mind and watch for results. I'm sure *CBM* readers remember the furor caused by: a Price Guide; Sotheby's and Christie's auctions; paying over *Guide*; moving the San Diego con to a larger location; Gemstone acquiring the *Guide*; the Internet; and eBay auctions. I may be preaching to the choir when I say this, but comic collecting is harder to kill than a vampire who is immune to wooden stakes, crucifixes, sunlight, and garlic! Certification is no more dangerous to the hobby than the above-mentioned "crises" which came before.

CGC's whole business model is designed around integrity and disclosure from a trusted and impartial third party. Our commitment to this model helps increase the confidence of the collector when buying, and helps the seller to move books, even issues which otherwise may not be as attractive. The books are out there, just take a look. So it irks me when it's cynically implied that certification hurts the consumer just because it's an innovation that changes the way people buy and sell comic books. Change can be good, and I invite all *CBM* readers to find out more about CGC by visiting us at trade shows, visiting our web site, or even giving us a call. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how receptive, even excited, we are to hear your opinions.

Finally, I know that I speak on behalf of everyone here when I thank Jon Berk for his well-researched and thoughtful comments on CGC in the same issue. Jon has expressed his opinions to us, and taken the time to have a voice in CGC's development. Thanks also to the *CBM* readers, many of whom are CGC Associates and customers, for their input on certification and for giving us this opportunity to set the record straight. Respectfully submitted,

—Steven Borock
Primary Grader,
Comics Guaranty, LLC

FORUM *Continued*



CONTROVERSIES & PREDICTIONS

Gary Carter, Michael Naiman and I met in the parking lot of a large hotel last June and shared the comfort of motor-home stuffed chairs in a wonderful, affable meeting that was, as I viewed it at the time an effort to bring closure to debates that had been raging in our hobby for months, many of which, I guess, are still going on in the pages of **CBM**.

Gary and Michael may say we came away from the meeting with no clear understanding, and that's okay. Maybe we did, maybe not. The issues we discussed involved Comic Guaranty, LLC (or CGC); the grading, encapsulation and certification of comics; where the hobby is heading; and **Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide**.

I remember saying I thought we three should work together, jointly keeping "an eye on CGC, if and when it should prove necessary," agreeing to confer when needed and if we found something **amiss**, including any instituted policy by CGC or an action by one of its personnel or graders, we would contact the company directly to discuss it and only if no reasonable explanation was received would we consider a public forum, such as **CBM**. If any issue appeared to be serious enough, I even said I'd lead the parade to find a resolution!

Maybe the fault was mine and I didn't clearly articulate my thoughts. These debates continue to rage, but I'm not hearing much new; I'm reading the same arguments made after I feel reasonable explanations have been given. Why are still beating some of these poor old dead horses? If we were to believe everything we read in **CBM**, one might think the hobby is beginning to sound like a political arena with truth, logic and objectivity taking a back seat to private agendas. I'm not saying that is the case, but I think it's time to back off, cool down, and see if some of these issues resolve themselves or go away.

I've known Gary and Michael a long time. Gary and I go back 30 years. I knew his brother, Lane, and both parents and we were practically family. The Carter boys were, and Gary still is, very lucky to have the support of Nick Carter, one of the true gentlemen of the business who gave his sons counsel and guidance far beyond the support most collectors get from their father. He was one of the true, early visionaries, who might have written the book on The Investor Mentality.

Before I move on, I'd like to address two paragraphs in **The Michael Naiman Report** in the April issue of **CBM** in reference to "grading definitions (that) have been mysteriously misinterpreted." Michael's "suspicions" lead him to "deduce that its genesis was at last May's Overstreet conference in Maryland." Michael, this just is not true! It was a meeting that was called hurriedly during an available window to discuss things before the summer circuit that Gemstone considered important. I was asked to moderate because I've mostly stopped dealing in comics and advocated no agenda, other than being pro-hobby, pro-dealer and pro-collector. I made it a point to cast no votes. The meeting was no different than a dozen I've attended that Bob Overstreet used to host annually in Tennessee. Gary was at a number of these think-tanks and knows, as well as I do, that the most productive sessions were the ones that were kept small. Their effectiveness eroded as they became larger. If anything, the group that came to Baltimore was too large. Maybe you and I should get together over dinner this summer and I'll tell you all I can remember.

To deviate for a moment, I'd like to define **who** I believe makes up this hobby (disregarding publishers, editors, artists, etc., who are merely here to serve): (1) Fans, who are the tenants, (2) dealers, who are the landlords and (3) investors, who are the bankers. A lot of people belong to two or more categories (not as many as you think). You can be a fan, a dealer or an investor without necessarily also being a collector, but if you **are** a collector, you **always** fall into one or more of these groups.

As an editorial imperative, I think it's essential for the good of **CBM** and the health of the hobby to zealously try to solicit more diversity of opinion representing **all three groups**. You should enlist more opinions among dealers who don't support conventional **CBM** philosophies and who don't submit market reports.

So, Gary and Michael (if you'll excuse my addressing you both directly), let's get down to a case or two. Do you **really** believe in the "softening" of grading standards? Please believe I'm not being flippant or sarcastic, but in your editorial, Gary, *"More money... less comic!"* you opined that "stricter and stricter grading standards are good for collectors, because less (fewer) specimens qualify as extremely high grade and generally collectors can buy comics for less." Do you **really**, truly believe that?

In fact, **under**grading is as much of a problem as **over**grading. Whenever somebody **saves** money, it **costs** somebody money. How often have you seen a dealer with the double standard, who looks at books with a very critical eye when he **buys** a collection, and then overlooks faults when grading for resale? If original owners were to get at least a few comic books certified before negotiating with dealers, I think it would level the fairness field.

The first true pedigree comics were the Mile Highs. Remember that great day, Gary, when I flew directly from Denver to San Diego to deliver

the very first Mile High D.C.'s I bought for the Carter family? Because of the reactions we all had and the discussions that ensued that day, I've always believed it was the day of the **dawning of the pedigrees!** It simultaneously was the day the demand for stricter grading began to take shape, because **before then there simply was no need!**

Historically, the seeds were planted for the future sales of books at multiples of guide, which, in turn, forced Bob Overstreet to begin widening spreads. Why? Think about it. If the prices of top condition books were to go up and the spread left narrow, prices **dis**proportionately would also go up on low grade books, and not reflect the true market! Therefore, you were not correct, in my opinion, when you concluded that, "throughout the history of our hobby, there has been a general trend to tighten grading standards **as** prices for books rise and the spread between grade-price **expands**." (Emphasis is mine.)

Remember, too, collectors do not "tighten" grading standards, dealers do, in response to their customers and in competition with each other to sell high grade books.

It's also incorrect to suggest that the nomenclature of VF/NM is motivated mostly by dealers to make more money. You and I talked about the significance of 9.0 and the grade nomenclature for hours last fall, Gary, and, frankly, I think we were pretty much in agreement how things **should** be. Ultimately, however, Overstreet has to make the final decision of what the Price Guide does and he vetoed our suggestions in favor of decisions that had been thrashed about months earlier.

Was Bob right to disregard our pleas? There is no "right" or "wrong" here. It's a value judgment and he made it. In any case, you've made your point as I now have, so let's drop it and go on (I predict it'll all eventually be moot, anyway).

Michael, concerning pedigrees, you wrote, "I believe we invented pedigrees because the grading system we use is incapable of describing page quality," etc. I wish I could agree with you, but I've seen no evidence to support its origin other than as a money maker, to **create** new values. Want to know my opinion, for what it is worth? I think pedigreed books are going to gradually fade into obscurity because there **is** no real reason they should exist. Yes, there certainly **are** many books around, **un**pedigreed, in equal condition to the pedigrees, so why should a comic book bring more money because it came from Denver, San Francisco or Allentown? It's ridiculous. I believe CGC's certification of comic books is what will slowly bring about the gradual leveling. Don't mistake what I'm saying, however: I do not think pedigrees are going to take a nose dive. They won't, but equally fine books will eventually catch up, though it may take years. In some instances — perhaps with the Edgar Church collection — provenance will account for some real monetary as well as historical value.

When I flew to New York in 1998 and then drove with Steve Fishler to New Jersey to see, pitch and convince Numismatic Guaranty Corporation that "slabbing" comic books was something they should get into, I had no idea it would set off such a furor. But I'm still glad we did it because what I believed then seems to be coming true. The market is strong right now and certified books are selling well. Even though top condition books are initially doing best, that was predictable. Eventually, however, **all** certified books will go up in value. The key to this is confidence. And certification will breed more and more confidence.

I've known most of the top Investors (group 3, remember) over the last thirty years who have come into the hobby, sometimes single-handedly changing values forever as they spent big bucks, but who then bailed out for almost always the same reason: they got burned by lies, deception and misgrading. CGC's going to bring a lot of that to a halt.

I found Lee Hester's market report in **CBM** interesting. He gave 24 examples (three or four would have sufficed) to prove how consistently his grading is stricter than CGC's. I would suggest he put stickers on his certified books to show **his** grades and theirs, if he's not already doing so. His customers will love him for it. What I really appreciated, however, was the consistency in his comparisons. Sounds like Hester is a good, tight, consistent grader, just as CGC's grading is consistent. Each proves the validity of the other. That they are not the same is beside the point. What pleases me is it tells everyone that the collector will be verifiably able to **depend** on the grades he will get from CGC. Most serious collectors (Gary, you and I have talked about this many times) agree that when a collector buys from an honest dealer, whether the grading is high or low, is immaterial. To get **exactly** what you want, you adjust your thinking to correspond to his thinking. If you think CGC's grading is higher or lower than it should be, adjust your thinking once for all future times when you order a book. Now you **know** in advance what you'll be getting! The advantage is you don't have to keep learning over and over, dealer by dealer. What you've learned once follows through every dealer you ever again order from who sells you a CGC certified book!

Everything I have seen or heard leads me to believe that CGC's standards really do represent an **average** of grading consistency in the market, not ultra strict, certainly, but not ultra loose, either. Average. No matter what you **call** a book, after all, the book is not going to change what it **is**. If dealer "A" grades a book VF and dealer "B" grades the same book VG and if you think it is F, it's still the same book and all these variations don't change that. To sum up, no collector with a brain in his head is going to be fooled **no matter who he buys a certified book from!**

Dating back to 1998, Gary and Michael, I was one of the proponents of the Qualified grade. I can remember emphasizing to CGC's management I felt it was in **imperative** classification since there is no agreement now and there **never has been** a consensus in this hobby as to just what a single, hidden but significant defect **means** to the condition of a book. So, I said, describe exactly what the condition is **except** for that defect and put a Warning Label on it, "qualify" the condition. How dumb would anyone have to be **not** to be able to figure that out? We're obviously not talking about a bullet hole through a book. You can see why I'm so astonished by the flap being generated in **CBM**. Why did I call it "imperative"? A 9.4 comic with a coupon clipped inside that does not affect a story — clearly, a **hidden** defect — is going to be worth a **lot** more to some collectors than a low grade, comparable complete copy. So you tell it like it is: it's a 9.4 book — but watch out, it's Qualified! — a clear warning signal that collectors will come to appreciate. I can see no reason why this **truth** in labeling is a "softening" of grading standards, and people are still only going to pay what they want to. This eliminates the controversy associated with having a grader pre-determining downgrades for specific defects that bother one person much more or much less than another. Only the Qualified classification can leave that decision up to the collector, where it belongs (and not to dealer, grader or expert).

I will remind everyone who reads CBM that numerical equivalency and nomenclature as used by CGC is an adaptation from Overstreet. If anyone doesn't like that, they should talk to Bob (sorry, Bob).

Michael, you suggest a "national symposium to be held at the San Diego Comic Con where all parties can get together and talk this out." Do you really believe this could happen, or would it just cause more divisiveness? Do you believe it would be possible without giving hotheads a platform and opportunity to sandbag participants (especially dealers)? Do you think any movers and shakers would bother to participate, or would they simply decline to get involved? I know you two guys well enough, Gary and Michael, to know you would **never** intentionally set this up with anything but an open, honest agenda. I'd be willing to moderate such a symposium if I were convinced the opportunity could be positive. Let's have dinner.

When I met the management at NGC in 1998 I understood immediately why they have such a good reputation for integrity, and as the team has expanded, there has not been one person added that I don't like or respect. Let's give them a break and work **with** them to help the hobby grow. They deserve it. The hobby deserves it.

Making predictions, my father used to warn me, can be dangerous, but I'm going to make a few anyway:

One. I predict comic book sales will continue to grow stronger throughout the Year 2000 and new record prices will continue.

Two. I predict record prices will be paid at Jerry Weist's Sotheby's auction coming up in June.

Three. I predict CGC certified comics will do outstandingly well this summer on Sotheby's.com.

Four. I predict Fine and Very Fine certified comics will begin to rise in value before the end of 2000.

Five. I predict within five years people will ignore nomenclature as redundant.

Six. I also predict people will continue to refer to encapsulation as "slabbing" which makes my skin crawl.

—Bruce Hamilton

The opinions expressed in CBM Forum are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher, editorial staff, advertisers, or Gemstone Publishing. CBM reserves the right to edit Forum submissions for space and/or content.

IN MEMORIAM

DICK SPRANG
1915 - 2000

Dick Sprang, one of the most influential and beloved stylists of the Golden Age of comics died May 10 in Arizona. He was 85 years old. Sprang was considered by many to be one of the best of the early Batman artists. He was DC's principle artist on Batman between 1941 and 1963. His name was virtually unknown to fans for decades because his work was signed under the "Bob Kane" moniker. In later years, Sprang received acclaim and numerous honors for his lifelong contribution to the industry and to comic book history.

Sprang had a wonderful and instantly recognizable style that many felt blended the grotesque characterizations of Chester Gould with the angular abstract shadows and shapes often associated with Batman's history. His pages set the perfect mood for the Dark Knight's adventures in Gotham City and his renditions of important elements of the Batman mythos (the Batmobile, the Batcave and its souvenir collection, and Wayne Manor) became synonymous with the classic look of the Dynamic Duo.

All of fandom will miss Dick Sprang's genius, gentlemanly persona, and his kindness to fans.

—MARK HERR

CBM FORUM

MEMO

From: Gary M. Carter, Editor

To: CBM Readers

Subject: Status Report, Gerber White-Space Sticker Project

BACK IN ISSUE #76 I ASKED FOR HELP from *CBM* readers with our Gerber White-Space Sticker project... and the response has been nothing short of phenomenal! As you can see by the checklist at right, the number of covers we now have has increased significantly.

I'd like to publicly thank all the hobbyists from around the world who have so generously supported our efforts by sending in color Xeroxes of the missing covers... including: Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. (who supplied an amazing number), Matt Nelson, Mike Bromberg, Mel Dybdahl, Mike Browning, Laurence Bowkett, Ed Luksik, Thomas Miller, Ken Barnes, John Morrow, Dan Kocher, Tom Gordon, Larry Yasgar, Phil Barnhart, Les Katzel, Fred Mommsen, Shaun Clancy, Grant Geissman, Michael Vassallo, Alan Gaulton, John Yon, Tom Morehouse, Tyler Pokrass, Rick Holley, Israel Nissenbaum, George Horner, and anyone else who I may have inadvertently left off the list.

I haven't forgotten about my promise to send a thank you gift to each contributor, either. Coming soon in the mail to each of you will be a surprise *CBM* collectible that only Gerber White-Space Sticker project contributors will receive, with our thanks and best wishes. (Look for it in the mail sometime this summer.)

Even though we've made great progress, there's still a ways to go. If you have any of the unchecked comics at right and you'd like to help, please send indicia info (issue number, date, and publisher) and a full size color copy of the cover (mailed flat and unfolded of course) to:

Gemstone Publishing Inc.,
CBM "Sticker" Project,
PO Box 180700
Coronado, CA 92178-0700

Gerber White Space Books

- ☐ A-1 #2; V1 pg. 1
- ☑ A-1 #85 (Best of the West #9); V1 pg. 3
- ☐ A-1 #114 (Dream Book of Love #2); V1 pg. 5
- ☑ Air Ace #32 (V3#8); V1 pg. 37
- ☑ Airboy Comics #92 (V8#9); V1 pg. 40
- ☑ All American Western #125; V1 pg. 47
- ☑ All Top Comics #4; V1 pg. 58
- ☑ All Top Comics #5; V1 pg. 58
- ☑ All-True Crime #46; V2 pg. 514
- ☐ All True Detective Cases #1; V1 pg. 59
- ☐ All True Detective Cases nn (#5); V1 pg. 59
- ☐ Animal Crackers #1; V1 pg. 68
- ☐ Animal Crackers #2; V1 pg. 68
- ☐ Animal Crackers #3; V1 pg. 68
- ☐ Atomic Thunderbolt #2; V1 pg. 78
- ☑ Authentic Police Cases #18; V1 pg. 80
- [ ] Barker (The) #13; V1 pg. 85
- ☑ Barnyard Comics #3; V1 pg. 86
- ☑ Blaze Carson #5; V1 pg. 110
- ☑ Blue Beetle #21; V1 pg. 112
- ☐ Blue Beetle #43; V1 pg. 113
- ☑ Blue Bolt #60 (V6#4); V1 pg. 116
- ☑ Blue Bolt #71 (V7#5); V1 pg. 116
- ☑ Blue Ribbon Comics #5; V1 pg. 120
- ☑ Bruce Gentry #7; V1 pg. 128
- ☑ Calling All Girls #1; V1 pg. 132
- ☑ Captain Aero #9 (V2#3); V1 pg. 134
- ☑ Captain Aero #26; V1 pg. 135
- ☐ Captain Battle #4; V1 pg. 139
- ☑ Captain Flight Comics #3; V1 pg. 140
- ☐ Captain Marvel #G-1 (or others from set); V1 pg. 145 [only one space]
- ☐ Captain Steve Savage #9 (or #10-14); V1 pg. 150 [only one space]
- ☑ Cat Man Comics #13; V1 pg. 152
- ☐ Challenger Comics nn (#1); V1 pg. 153
- ☑ Comedy Comics #12; V1 pg. 171
- ☐ Courage Comics #1; V1 pg. 181
- ☑ Crime Can't Win #8; V1 pg. 189
- ☑ Crime Can't Win #9; V1 pg. 189
- ☐ Dark Mysteries #25; V1 pg. 208
- ☐ Date With Millie #1 (Atlas series); V1 pg. 209
- ☑ Doc Savage #15 (V2#3); V1 pg. 231
- ☑ Exciting Comics #28; V1 pg. 243
- ☑ Famous Crimes #20; V1 pg. 247
- ☑ Famous Funnies #9; V1 pg. 248
- ☑ Famous Funnies #35; V1 pg. 249)
- ☐ Famous Gang #2; V1 pg. 234
- ☐ Feature Books #21 (Lone Ranger); V1 pg. 258
- ☐ Feature Books #24; V1 pg. 258
- ☐ Feature Presentation #4; V1 pg. 265
- ☐ Fight Against Crime #7; V1 pg. 266
- ☐ Flame #4; V1 pg. 273
- ☑ Flash Comics #56; V1 pg. 276
- ☑ Four Color #511; V1 pg. 299
- ☐ 4 Favorites #24; V1 pg. 306)
- ☑ 4 Favorites #26; V1 pg. 307)
- ☐ 4 Most #41; V1 pg. 308)(
- ☐ Fox Giants #17 (Everybody's Comics); V1 pg. 310
- ☐ Fox Giants #18; V1 pg. 310
- ☐ Fox Giants #37 (Western Roundup); V1 pg. 311
- ☐ Frisky Fables #10 (V2#7); V1 pg. 313)
- ☑ Frisky Fables #14 (V2#11); V1 pg. 313
- ☐ Funnies #22; V1 pg. 318
- ☑ Gay Comics #18; V1 pg. 327
- ☐ Giant Comics Edition #1 (or #2-4); V1 pg. 330 [only one space]
- ☐ Indian Braves #4; V1 pg. 84
- ☑ Jeanie #21 (or #22-27); V1 pg. 207 [only one space]
- ☑ Jesse James #9 (or #10-19); V1 pg. 377 [only one space]
- ☑ Jing Pals Comics #1; V1 pg. 379
- ☑ Jing Pals Comics #4; V1 pg. 379
- ☑ Joker Comics #42; V1 pg. 386
- ☐ Katy Keene Spectacular #3 (#1); V2 pg. 411
- ☑ Keen Komics #1 (V2#1); V2 pg. 413
- ☐ Kit Carson #4; V2 pg. 421
- ☐ Large Feature #6 (Terry); V2 pg. 424
- ☐ Large Feature Comics #17 (Gang Busters); V2 pg. 425
- ☐ Large Feature Comics #20 (Donald Duck); V2 pg. 425
- ☐ Leading Screen Comics #61 (or #62-77); V2 pg. 430 [only one space]
- ☐ Liberty Comics #4; V2 pg. 432
- ☐ Liberty Comics #5; V2 pg. 432
- ☐ Little Dot #6; V2 pg. 435
- ☑ Little Lana #9; V2 pg. 423
- ☑ Marvel Tales #132; V2 pg. 463
- ☑ Mickey Mouse Mag. #4; V2 pg. 474
- ☑ Movie Comics #3; V2 pg. 494
- ☑ Movie Love #15; V2 pg. 495
- ☑ Murder Incorporated #5; V2 pg. 495
- ☑ Mutt & Jeff nn (#2); V2 pg. 496
- ☐ Outlaws of the West #11; V1 pg. 130
- ☑ Picture Stories From The Bible #2; V2 pg. 535
- ☑ Popular Comics #28; V2 pg. 550
- ☑ Popular Comics #30; V2 pg. 550
- ☑ Power Comics #2; V2 pg. 553
- ☑ Prize Comics #20; V2 pg. 555
- ☐ Red Ryder Comics #13; V2 pg. 571
- ☑ Rocket Kelly #5; V2 pg. 576
- ☐ Silver Streak Comics #22a; V2 pg. 600
- ☐ Silver Streak Comics #24a; V2 pg. 600
- ☑ Silver Streak Comics #25a; V2 pg. 600
- ☐ Space Adventures #19; V2 pg. 611
- ☐ Sparkler Comics #32; V2 pg. 614
- ☐ Star Comics #11; V2 pg. 625
- ☑ Star Spangled Comics #60; V2 pg. 629
- ☑ Super-Mystery Comics #31 (V6#1); V2 pg. 664
- ☑ SuperSnipe #13 (V2#1); V2 pg. 666
- ☐ Terrific Comics #15; V1 pg. 364
- ☑ Thrilling Comics #33; V2 pg. 697
- ☑ Tim Holt #41; V2 pg. 701
- ☑ Toy Town #2; V2 pg. 715
- ☐ True Sport Picture Stories #14 (V2#2); V2 pg. 721
- ☑ Wow What A Magazine #2; V2 pg. 790
- ☐ MYSTERIOUS EMPTY BOX; V1 pg. 66

THE MICHAEL NAIMAN REPORT

From X-Men to EC

X-stuff is really taking off... and the increased prices are probably no surprise to anyone. Why? Well, the X-men movie is due out in July and the mega-merchandising machine has geared up to mammoth proportions to meet the demand. While not at the level of Star Wars, you can get just about any X-permutation of apparel, games, combat gear, or computer games you want.

The fact of the matter is that the comic books (remember those) are just a licensing excuse these days for the merchandise avalanche that follows any theatrical push. The real bucks to be made are when the local comic shop starts pushing the peripheral product.

But what is an old time comic book store to do if they choose not to "diversify" into the realm of comic fads. I'll tell you. Go out of business. These days it is extremely difficult to walk into a comic book store and find row upon row of back issues. The retailer has been put into a position that unless they carry all of the extraneous tie-in material, they'll lose their clientele to a store that does carry this stuff. Sad but true. It appears that the latest wave of comic creators are just interested in licensing their characters so that they can get rich quick and have McFarlanesque bank accounts so that they can purchase the next home run ball worth 3 million dollars!

It's a shame to realize that we might soon be witnessing the demise of the comic reader. Sure there will be comic character collectors, but, will they be collecting and reading the books or just be interested in the latest low numbered action figure?

The X-Men series from 1977 to 1980 (issues #100-140) have shown some very strong price support recently. They are realizing Guide and above for Near Mint issues. These books are cherished by the 30-something crowd that have reached a time in their life when they have a large amount of disposable income. They are repurchasing their childhood... just like the Silver Age group did years ago!

Don't be surprised to see a major X-travaganza at the shows and conventions this summer. Dealers will be wise to stock up on any X-thing they can get their X-pert hands on.

Horror

In contrast to the upcoming X-mania mentioned above, I am puzzled by the lack of a ground swell in collecting mania for ECs. We are now in the midst of the 50th anniversary of EC comics... and these classic issues are not only vintage '50s, but they're also wonderful! There's a stampede for other publishers' horror based books and the prices realized for the Metropolis Northford collection bear out the enormous purchasing mania surrounding this genre.

Perhaps the EC books are suffering the same economic forces as the Disney Duck books have encountered. They've both been reprinted in a black and white hardbound volume form. Easy to purchase and great just to read! Kudos go to Gemstone for republishing the originals in an easy to hold comic book format so that the Average Joe can read (afford) these masterpieces. The pressures of the reprint arena are almost certainly affecting the appreciation curve of these books. Another factor might also be the graying of the collectors who originally purchased them oh so long ago. Methinks they might not have the megabucks necessary to re-purchase their 50-year-old memories.

The Gaines file copies from the EC library are truly a wonder to behold. If you ever get a chance to take a gander at one of these examples, you'll realize what a Mint EC book really looks like! This year's San Diego show will feature many of the EC creators, some attending for the first time. Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to personally meet them! *(Continued on page 67)*

JAMIE HEWBOLD/GINO SIRAGUSA
SOCALCOMICS
8280 CLAIREMONT DRIVE #124
SAN DIEGO, CA 92111
858•715•8669

Sales are brisk, while we continue to purchase significant books from local collectors. Per the trend, our Silver Age keys fly out of our store while non-keys and commons remain behind. We long for the days when most every comic collector was a completest and every issue in a run sold frequently. On the upside, mid-grade Silver Age comics are selling quite well, with the non-keys going for as little as 10% off of Overstreet Guide.

Speaking of the Guide, many of our customers (those who own the following genres and types) said they were disappointed that there were virtually no radical price changes in this year's Overstreet... changes reflecting the sales trends for pre-Code Horror, Timelys, Marvel keys, and the like. Fortunately though, Overstreet also glided over the huge price drops reflected on eBay and other auction systems (disappointing, of course, for those who like price drops so that they can purchase good books at bargain prices). So far, centering on the middle ground in comic pricing demonstrates that the Overstreet Price Guide is just that—a guide. We feel the Guide provides safe, neutral ground to attach fair market values to comics that developed pricing legacies going back 30+ years.

Golden Age Sales: All American Western #110 GD/VG $30; Blackhawk #21 GD/VG $64.00, #27 FN $126; Shock SuspenStories #17 VG+ $34; Startling #48 GD/VG $75; Weird Tales Of The Future #1 GD $75; Yellowjacket #5 VG $58,#7 FN $84,#8 VG+ $60.

◆◆ CBM MarketWatch ◆◆

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#437 NM.....$15.....68%
#449 NM.....$8....Guide

Adventure
#273 GD+.....$52.....4.33X
#308 VF.....$41.....80%
#312 VF.....$25.....64%

All Flash
#3 VF.....$795.....89%
#4 VG+.....$505.....1.56X
#5 GD+.....$162.....1.36X
#6 FN+.....$400.....1.37X
#7 FN+.....$435.....1.49X
#8 FN-.....$255.....88%

All Star
#6 FN.....$625.....69%
#9 VF-.....$965.....62%
#10 VG.....$540.....96%
#11 FN..... $670.....78%
#12 FN.....$545.....69%
#55 FN.....$420.....1.32X

All True Crime
#49 VG.....$14.....70%

Amazing Adventures
#14 NM.....$31.....1.55X
#17 NM.....$15.....75%

Aquaman
#1 FN.....$66.....40%
#13 NM.....$34.....43%
#17 FN.....$19.....79%

Archie
#49 VG.....$15.50.....50%
#50 GD+.....$18.....56%
#56 GD+.....$10.50.....66%

Archie's Pals and Gals
#2 VG.....$25.....31%

Amazing Spider-Man
#1 VG.....$1500.....1.07X
#24 NM.....$200....Guide
#28 VF+.....$175.....74%
#35 VF.....$99.....95%
#81 NM.....$46.....1.15X

Avengers
#2 FN+.....$175.....1.12X
#134 NM.....$9.....90%

Batman
#45 FN+.....$280.....1.2X
#217 FN.....$11.....1.46X
#238 FN.....$26.....2.47X

Chamber Of Darkness
#7 NM.....$36.....2X

Conan
#23 NM.....$18.....75%

Creepy
#1 VF.....$26.....43%

Crime Does Not Pay
#48 FN.....$27.....53%
#55 VG.....$12.....40%

Crime Fighters
#6 GD+.....$15.....1.5X

Crime Patrol
#7 VG.....$50.....54%

Crime Smashers
#9 VG.....$22.50.....50%

Crime SuspenStories
#1 FN.....$190.....54%

Daredevil
#3 NM.....$260.....84%
#131 NM.....$22.....1.2X

Fantastic Four
#86 NM.....$26.....87%

Fight Against Crime
#3 GD+.....$46.....3.53X

Flash
#137 FN.....$88.....73%

Forever People
#1 VF.....$20.....77%

Giant Size
Avengers #1 NM$10.....63%
Conan #3 NM.....$9.....90%
Conan #4 NM.....$9.....90%
Defenders #2 NM$14...1.16X
FF #3 NM.....$23.....1.53X

Green Lantern
#12 FN+.....$50.....1.11X
#89 NM.....$23.....1.15X

Groovy
#1 VF+.....$32.....71%

House Of Mystery
#181 NM.....$36.....1.2X

House Of Secrets
#85 NM.....$50.....1.15X
#87 Nm.....$50.....1.51X

Hulk
#181 NM-.....$450.....94%
#181 NM-.....$490.....1.02X

Iron Fist
#14 NM-.....$56.....59%

Iron Man
#3 NM-.....$41.....68%

Journey Into Mystery
#95 VF.....$95....Guide

Justice League of America
#50 NM.....$25.....55%

Joe Palooka
#108 FN.....$26.....2.16X

Lancelot Link
#1 NM.....$26.....65%

Laugh
#24 VG.....$42.....1.24X

Lois Lane
#1 GD+.....$105.....46%

Marvel Spotlight
#3 VF.....$14.....64%
#4 FN.....$5.....50%
#15 NM.....$7.50.....1.5X

Mister Miracle
#1 NM.....$37.....1.06X

Rawhide Kid
#35 VG.....$21.....1.24X

Sensation
#39 FN.....$127.....90%
#74 VG.....$88.....1.14X

Sgt Fury
#13 VF.....$100.....53%

Silver Surfer
#6 FN.....$21.....82%
#14 NM.....$65.....93%

Son of Satan
#1 NM.....$11.....61%

Strange Adventures
#100 VG+.....$26.....93%

Strange Tales
#89 VG.....$90.....1.13X
#101 VG.....$101.....70%
#102 VF.....$160.....85%
#110 FN.....$265....Guide
#111 GD+.....$52.....1.79X
#129 NM.....$42.....93%
#149 NM.....$32.....1.28X

Superboy
#53 FN.....$25.....51%
#76 VF.....$61....Guide
#89 VG.....$27.....50%
#90 VF.....$61.....1.3X
#100 VG.....$16.....47%

Superman
#13 VF.....$960.....87%
#15 VG.....$330.....83%
#35 VF.....$350.....66%
#120 VG.....$32.....57%

Superman Family
#166 NM.....$17.....85%
#167 NM.....$22.....1.1X

Tales From The Crypt
#31 VG+.....$66.....83%
#45 VG+.....$42.....62%

Thor
#144 FN.....$10.....1.11X
#154 NM.....$22.....73%

Tales Of Suspense
#56 VF.....$105.....2.33X
#59 NM.....$370.....1.40X
#85 NM.....$30.....75%
#90 NM.....$42.....1 05X
#91 NM.....$30.....75%
#93 NM.....$30.....75%

True Crime
#V2#1 AppVG..$75....Guide

Tales To Astonish
#47 NM.....$180.....1.29X
#64 NM.....$42.....84%
#93 NM-.....$40....Guide

Vault Of Horror
#35 VG.....$31.....65%
#39 VG.....$78.....1.95X

World Of Mystery
#1 VG-.....$41.....50%

World's Finest
#2 VG.....$495.....62%
#3 VG.....$395.....64%
#4 FN.....$585.....78%
#6 FN.....$510.....91%
#8 VF-.....$810.....88%
#9 FN.....$430.....79%

Wonder Woman
#32 VG.....$78.....68%
#64 GD+.....$76.....2.92X
#66 VG+.....$66.....1.32X
#68 VG+.....$68.....1.36X

X-Men
#8 VF+.....$175.....90%
#12 VG.....$65.....1.05X
#16 NM.....$100.....80%
#48 NM.....$60.....92%
#94 MT.....$890.....1.93X
#105 NM.....$51.....1.46X
#106 NM.....$51.....1.46X

Young Love
#110 FN.....$10.....66%

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #82 NM- $70; Avengers #4 FN $375; Captain America #100 FN+ $90; Daredevil #1 GD- $113; Fantastic Four #1 GD- $675, #28 FN- $65, #33 FN- $24, #49 FN $72, #50 FN+ $85, #67 FN/VF (Stan Lee autographed) $100, Fantastic Four Annual #1 VF/NM $600; Tales Of Suspense #39 FN/VF $1,170; Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats #1 FN+ $40; X-Men Comics #2 FN- $400.

JOHN PIRES • VAULT COMIC AUCTIONS
PO BOX 257
SOUTH NORWOOD
LONDON, SE25 6JN, ENGLAND
Tel: 011•44•208•771•8278
auctions@vaultcomics.com

The after-auction period is our busiest time with invoicing and packaging... plus it's also when everyone who has been thinking about selling their collection, decides to chose this time to contact us with consignments! So squeezing a few extra minutes into the hour, here are some brief, but interesting results from our auction last week. (Please note that none of the books offered for sale were slabbed!)

1930-50: Action #12 VG- $656; Dickie Dare #1 VF+ $262; Famous Funnies #41 VG $138; Four Color #25 (1st series-Popeye) GD+ $54; Jimmy Wakely #7 VF+ $218; More Fun #102

(2nd Superboy) FN+ $345, #106 GD $105; Space Mouse #1 FN- $16; Weird Tales (pulp) Oct/1938 FN- $204.

Silver Age: Action #223 VG- $44, #252 VG+ $175; Amazing Spider-Man #5 VF $546; Brave & Bold #28 PR $36; Fantastic Four #55 VF $75; Flash #105 FN- $769; Hawkman #1 NM- $649; Lois Lane #1 AppVG $294; Nick Fury #1 NM+ $182 (!), #5 FN $17; Showcase #3 VG+ $122; Silver Surfer #9 NM- $106, #14 NM $145; Spectacular Spider-Man Magazine #1 NM+ $223, #2 NM $141; Strange Tales #51 (1st SA issue) VF- $87, #95 VF- $96; X-Men #14 NM $308, #15 NM- $246.

Bronze Age: Adventures On The Planet Of The Apes #1-11 (set) VF/NM $86; DC 100 pg Spec. #15 NM- $49; Green Lantern #76 VF+ $126; GS-Kid Colt #1, 2 (one lot) NM- $105; Haunted Love #1 VF $35; Lois Lane #113 (giant) VF $71; My Love #14 (25¢ Marvel) VG $17.

Memorabilia and other material: Amazing World Of DC Comics #1 VF+ $61; Marvel Super-Heroes 1976 uncut sticker sheet FN $224; Marvelmania Club Catalog (1969) FN- $70; Ditko original art from Beware the Creeper #5 (pg11) $175; Parade Of Pleasure w/dj FN- (DJ: GD) $142; Thunderbirds Are Go (US one sheet) VF $163.

DAN CUSIMANO

FLYING DONUT TRADING COMPANY
1336 BUTTERMILK LANE
RESTON, VA 20190-3904
dcusimano@usa.net

Sales of Bronze Age books continue to be strong on eBay, with high grade books still obtaining multiples of Guide. New Overstreet prices on some key Bronze books are coming more in line with what the marketplace is showing, but are still low on several keys. Guide is very high on Silver Age books with mid-grade books on eBay selling for significantly under Guide.

The CGC grading service is revolutionizing eBay selling. High grade (NM 9.2 and above) books go for a significant premium above Guide, with lower and mid grade CGC books actually getting Guide. Some of the silly prices realized on very high grade Modern Age books are mind-boggling ($300 for a 9.9 Amazing Spider-Man #300, for example). My copy of Star Wars #1, 35¢ variant edition, CGC graded at a NM- 9.2 sold for $1,278, 2.5x Guide.

It was good to see the 30¢ variants getting listed in the new Guide, but I feel the prices are still out of line for most of the books. The price should not be a blanket 4x over the regular issues, as there are definite scarcity patterns for certain issues. By far the hardest to find is the Weird Wonder Tales #15, with certain other westerns and reprint books tough as well.

For those looking to complete a set, note that Mighty Marvel Western #44 and #46 do NOT have variant issue covers. Mighty Marvel Western #44 is cover dated March, 1976, too early, and #46 is cover dated September, 1976, which is too late.

Sales (all eBay): CGC graded books: All Star #24 VG+ 4.5 $355; Detective #71 VG- 3.5 $213; Star Wars #1 NM- 9.2 (35¢ variant) $1,278; Strg. Tales 110 VG 4.0 $180; Wonder Woman #200 NM+ 9.6 $104, #196 NM 9.4 $44.

Silver Age Sales: Batman #181 VG $31; Fantastic Four Annual #2 FN/FN+ $125; Fantastic Four #81 VF $27, #83 VF $27, JLA #73 VF $38, #78 VF $27, Thor #160 VF $30, Wonder Woman #179 F/F+ $21.

Bronze Age Sales: Amaz. Spider-Man #100 NM- $125, #118 NM $22; Amazing Adventures #15 $31; Avengers #100 FN $26; Fantastic Four #116 VF+ $21; X-Men #84 FN $10.

BRUCE EDWARDS • QUASAR COMICS

PO BOX 2227
LOUISVILLE, KY 40201-2227
502•451•4852
www.QuasarComics.com

I auctioned a few comics on eBay recently, as a precursor to my massive auction #23 which closed on May 13, 2000. The results were interesting and tend to support those dealers who put some type of minimum bid on their lots to protect themselves. The following 13 books were auctioned with starting bids of $1 each. With three exceptions, all went for substantial discounts from the Guide price. The total price realized was $235.77 which works out to 54.5% of Guide. The price realized and percentage of Guide is listed:

Crime Does Not Pay #55 VG $9.10 30.33%; Date with Millie #3 GVG $6.05 40.33%, #4 GVG $6.05 40.33%; Funny 3-D #1 VG+, no glasses $5.50 44.43%; Herbie the Fat Fury #5 $17.50 38.78%; Little Eva 3-D #1 VG+, no glasses $5.03 22.36%; Marvel Tales #106 FaGD (Atlas 1952) $48.00 128.00%; Millie the Model #73 GVG $28.00 583.33%, #75 VG $20.50 427.08%; Pink Panther #1 ('71) $4.26 35.50%; Three Stooges 3-D #2, no glasses VG- $20.51 24.90%; Whack Comics #1 3-D VG+, no glasses $3.75 11.11%; When Worlds Collide Motion Picture #110 GD+ $61.52 52.41%.

In other areas, I continue to have a lot of Big Little Book and fanzine inquiries. I'll report next month on the results of my large auction which should give a good indicator of the overall health of the comic market.

ROBERT BEERBOHM COMIC ART

PO BOX 507
FREMONT, NE 68026
402•727•4071
beerbohm@teknetwork.com

The last few months have found me going to a number of shows, consequently doing a lot of traveling. In January I flew into NYC to set up at Mike Carbonaro's Big Apple show and then onto the comics festival in Angouleme, France. The French have a huge comics museum funded by the government. The show is five times the size of San Diego and 250,000 people come through the exhibits!

Later I found myself doing a three show tour beginning in Manhattan, then the huge Atlantique City collectibles show in Atlantic City, New Jersey, then onto a comics festival in Rome, Italy. Sales at this Atlantic City show were great. I was amazed that westerns, TV/Movie, cartoon, and other genres which usually sit at a "normal" comics show were flying off the tables. In addition, fairly priced Marvel and DC comic books sold well—which is what really surprised me! Big Little Books sold well (I moved close to 50 of them—about a quarter of my current stock.) as well as children's illustrated books. They disappeared as soon as I placed them on the table. This show has 12 miles of aisle space to walk up & down. Seems very few people hit the entire contingent of booths. I know I didn't—and I tried to!!

Golden Age sold well there also. I moved a copy of Sun Girl #2 FN $400, Blonde Phantom FN+ $225, Batman #43 VG+ $200, a short stack of Dell Felix the Cat for $200, and many more comics. I picked up all kinds of nice comics related items such as a 1954 Superman Paint by Numbers boxed set completely unused, a great long billed Donald Duck china plate circa 1936 among other cool stuff.

On to Rome where the mind set is vastly different amongst *(Continued on page 67)*

WonderCon was WonderFull!

Joe Field (of Flying Colors Comics) and the WonderCon group put on another spectacular show. I had not seen this much excitement before a convention in quite some time. I also had not seen this much dealer to dealer activity before a convention in quite some time either. WonderCon 2000 met... and exceeded... all expectations once again!

Bronze Age, Golden Age, and high grade Silver Age all found a huge reception by collectors and dealers alike. It's not too often that those of us on the West Coast are allowed to see the inventory of the East Coast guys, although some collectors mentioned their disappointment at not seeing several of the larger East Coast dealers (e.g. Metropolis, Four Color, and Showcase New England, etc.) there. Collector and fan attendance was great however, and Saturday and Sunday they really packed the aisles.

Golden Age

If a market can be gauged by what is absent, then we should have a pretty good idea in regards to Gold. Where was the high grade Timely? Have we entered the age of collecting where all of the "good stuff" finds a home well before it ever reaches the convention floor? That seemed to be the consensus among collectors looking to find something "exciting". Again this year, Dave King brought some nice DC keys and it was great to see Harley Yee, Bob Storms, Ted Van Liew, and Ed Jaster with such great material.

Golden Age Sales: All Select #1 no CF, cvr FR, $450; Batman #1 no CF $1,450; Fighting Yank #4 NM- $775; Human Torch #2 (#1) no CF $980; Leading #1 FN- $990, #2 FN/VF $495; NY Fair #40 GD $750; Real Fact #6 VF $645; Science #1 FR $250; Seven Seas #6 FN+ $550; Sky Blazers #2 FN $150; SubMariner #1 FN- $6,800; Superman #25 GD $150; Taffy #2 FN $80.

Atom Age:

Will the demand for these books ever slow down? Gauging from WonderCon, probably not anytime soon. If it was nice, it sold. Dealers mined the booths during setup and the rest was hit pretty hard by Friday afternoon. A very nice original owner collection of Schomburg airbrush cover books and Fox Good Girl material was unveiled, but not for sale, with even the most jaded dealer looking on in awe. Steve Sibra always brings something fun to the table and Richard Evans of Bedrock is always a cornerstone of the show. Think the rush to pre-Code horror or Good Girl is over? Think again! But despite continued requests and demands, the material just wasn't there to be purchased.

Atom Age Sales: GI Jane #1 FN $85; JoJo Comics #16 VF+ $290; Linda #1 VF $165; Love Stories #9 VG/FN $48; Murder Incorporated #6 FN $110; Phantom Lady #23 GD $180, #13 FN $895; Playful Little Audrey #1 FN $100; Powerhouse Pepper #5 VG $220; Punch Comics #12 GD $160; Spellbound #2 VF $280; Strange Fantasy #3 FN $140; True Love Pictorial #9 FN $78.

Silver Age

Steve Borock and the Comics Guaranty Corporation had a booth and quite a few of the CGC graded books were around, especially Silver keys above VF. The wave of the future? Perhaps when it comes to high grade Silver, "new stuff," and dealer mail order. The evidence from on-line sales combined with generally higher asking price multiples and the plethora of slabbed Silver leads one to believe that CGC is onto something.

Silver Age Sales: Adventure #300 VF/NM $250; Amazing Fantasy #15 appVF+ (8.5) $1,400; Amazing Spider-Man #25 NM (9.4) $315; Bonanza #1 VF $80; Iron Man #1 NM+ $550; Journey Into Mystery #83 FR/GD $395; Nick Fury #1 MT $125; Our Army at War #83 FR $200; Peanuts #1 VF $145; Showcase #4 FR $1,300, #60 NM- $320; Star Spangled War Stories #138 NM- $210; The Avengers #4 VF/NM $1,650.

Bronze Age

Corny as this sounds, it really is the last call to jump on board the Bronze train. When just about every major dealer is now featuring Bronze on their displays and in their catalogs, it's a sure sign that a genre has really arrived. Also Fireside books have gone through the roof and that market is now really starting to define itself. So far, Bronze Marvel keys and scarce DC lead the way in this era, with the caveat that it must be high grade to bring any sort of multiples. Reading copies are also in demand, but must be priced accordingly to move.

Bronze Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #102 VF $45; Avengers #93 NM- $70; Captain America #143 FN $14; Daredevil #81 VF- $32; Giant Size Dr. Strange #1 NM- $30; Green Lantern #77 NM $120; Hulk #181 8.5 $395; Jonah Hex #92 MT $25; Lil Kids #1 VG $18; Marvel Team-Up #1 VF/NM $140; #3 MT $50; Strange Adventures #205 VF- $150; Super Girl #1 MT $40; Superfriends #1 NM+ $45, #2 NM/MT $25; Tomb of Dracula #1 VF/NM $70; Wonder Woman #200 VF $32; X-Men #139 NM $55.

Unfortunately, the mid to small level dealer seemed to be missing this year from WonderCon... perhaps they've declined to pony up for a huxter's booth in favor of a "table" on the Internet. No one can really blame them, but since we counted on for those interesting and affordable surprises, they were surely missed. Overall, most of the prices realized at WonderCon reflected a strong and confident market... and growing collector demand. Looks like WonderCon has kicked off the convention season with a bang!

Greg Manning Auction Results

The following is a sample of comics books sold at the recent Greg Manning Comic Book/Comic Art Auction held Saturday, April 29, 2000 in West Caldwell, New Jersey. The auction set several price records, especially for high grade and/or pedigree pre-Code horror material. Please note that the "Hammer Prices" listed below include the 15% buyer's premium and represent the total price the buyer actually paid.

Adventure #43 (Mile High) CGC NM+ 9.6 .$15,525
Adventure #45 (Mile High) CGC NM+ 9.6 .$13,225
Adventure #48 CGC appVF/NM 9.0 .....$4,025
Adv. Into The Unknown #34 (Bethlehem) VF+$173
Adv. of Big Boy #1 VF $575
Alarming Tales #1 (Bethlehem) VF+ $242
All New Comics #11 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$1,093
Amazing Fantasy #15 CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$19,550
Amazing Spider-Man #3 CGC VF/NM 9.0 ....$2,415
ASM Annual #1 (Slobodian) CGC NM- 9.2..$1,035
Am's Best #19 (Mile High) CGC NM- 9.2.....$1,668
Am's Best #21 (Mile High) CGC NM- 9.2.....$1,380
Atom-Age Combat #5 ((Bethlehem) VF+.....$230
Atomic Attack #5 (#1, Bethlehem) VF+.....$518
Atomic War #3 ((Bethlehem) VF.....$546
Avenger #1 (A-1 #129, Bethlehem) NM-.....$805
Avengers #2 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$546
Avengers #4 (Slobodian) CGC NM- 9.2 .....$1,955
Baffling Myst. #11 (Northford) CGC NM+ 9.6$1,208
Baffling Mysteries #12 (Bethlehem) VF+ $489
Baffling Mysteries #20 (Bethlehem) NM- $633
Bware! T Tales #8 (Bethlehem) CGC VF+ 8.5 $1,265
Black Cat Myst #30 (Harvey file) VF/NM $242
Black Cobra #1 (Bethlehem) VF+ $311
Black Knight #3 (Atlas, Bethlehem) VF-.....$311
Blue Bolt Weird Tales #107 (Bethlehem) VF $604
Buster Crabbe #4 (Bethlehem) CGC NM 9.4 $1,035
Captain America #1 (1941) CGC VG/FN 5.0$16,675
Cap Am #2 (1941) CGC FN/VF 7.0.....$4,600
Captain Am #3 (1941) CGC appVF+ 8.5 .....$3,450
Captain America #6 (1941) CGC FN- 5.5.....$1,725
Captain America #14 (1942) CGC VF- 7.5 ....$1,323
Captain America #32 (1943) CGC VF 8.0 .....$1,093
Captain America #70 (1949) CGC FN+ 6.5.....$978
Captain America #73 (1949) CGC FN+ 6.5...$1,150
Cap Science #2 (Bethlehem) CGC NM+ 9.6 $2,645
Captain Science #6 (Bethlehem) VF-.....$322
Captain Video #5 (Bethlehem) VF $460
Chmbr of Chlls #10 (Harvey file) CGC NM- 9.2$230
Chamber of Chills #23 (#3, Bethlehem) VF/NM$431
Circus The Comic Riot #1 CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$4,888
Crime Does Not Pay #33 (double cover) VF $1,438
Dark Mysteries #1 (Bethlehem) CGC NM- 9.2$3,335
Dark Mysteries #13 (Bethlehem) VF+.....$546
Dark Mysteries #20 (Bethlehem) VF+.....$546
Dark Shadows #1 (Gold Key, 1969) VF $92
Date With Danger #5 (Bethlehem) NM- $230
Detective #10 CGC FN 6.0 .....$2,070
Diary of Horror #1 (Avon, 1952, Beth) VF/NM.$834
Eerie #8 (Avon, 1952) CGC VF 8.0 .....$661
Exciting #1 CGC VF- 7.5 .....$2,070
Exciting #2 (Nova Scotia) CGC VF 8.0 .....$1,610
Fantastic #9 (Bethlehem) VF.....$196
Fantastic #10 (#1, Ajax, Beth) CGC NM- 9.2 ....$299
Fantastic Fears #7 (#1, Beth) CGC NM- 9.2 ...$1,150
Fantastic Four #1 CGC FN/VF $5,463
Fantastic Worlds #7 (Bethlehem) NM- $242
Fight #53 NM.....$196
Fight #61 CGC VF+ 8.5.....$242
Fighting Yank #16 (Big Apple) CGC NM 9.4 ....$748
Fighting Yank #17 (Big Apple) CGC VF+ 8.5....$431
Fighting Yank #18 (MH) CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$1,150
Forbidden Worlds #2 (Bethlehem) VF/NM...$1,150
FC #9 (Donald Duck) CGC VG/FN 5.0 .....$1,840
Funnies #54 (Csmc Aero) CGC VF/NM 9.0 .....$546
Ghost Rider #2 FN+..... ....$299
Green Mask #1 (Fox, 1940) CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$2,530
Guns Against Gngstrs #1 (MH) CGC NM- 9.2$1,725
Haunted Thrills #1 (Bethlehem) CGC VF+ 8.5..$805
Hit #1 VF- $2,530
Horrific #1 (Bethlehem) VF $1,323
Horrific #12 (Bethlehem) NM- $863
Horror from the Tomb #1 (Bethlehem) VF $863
Hse of Mys #13 (Northford) CGC VF/NM 9.0 ..$546
House of Mystery #3 (Aurora) CGC VF+ 8.5....$575
House of Mystery #93 (Bethlehem) VF $115
House of Secrets #20 (Bethlehem) NM.....$460
Human Torch #3 (#2, 1940) CGC VF/NM 9.0$6,325
Human Torch #4 (#3, 1941) CGC VF 8.0 .....$2,300
Human Torch #8 (1942) CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$5,463
Human Torch #23 (1946) CGC VF/NM 9.0....$2,530
Human Torch #26 (1947) CGC VF/NM 9.0....$1,840
Human Torch #28 (1947) CGC VF 8.0 .....$805
Human Torch #29 (1947-48) VF- $460
Incredible Hulk #1 CGC NM- 9.2 .....$18,400
Incredible Science Fiction #32 CGC NM- 9.2 .$719
Jo-Jo #20 (Fox, 1948) VF $184
Journey into Mystery #6 (Bethlehem) VF $604
Journey into Mystery #75 (Bethlehem) VF/NM $374
Journey into Mystery #78 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$575
Lost Worlds #6 (Beth) CGC NM- 9.2 .....$978
MAD #1 VF $3,105
MAD #5 (Spokane) CGC VF+ 8.5.....$3,220
Marvel Mystery #64 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$1,725
Marvel Mystery #70 ("D" copy) CGC NM 9.4$4,600
Marvel Mystery #82 CGC VF+ 8.5 ....$2,760
Marvel Mystery#88 FN $431
Marvel Mystery #92 CGC NM- 9.2.....$6,613
Marvel Tales #102 (Nrthfrd) CGC VF/NM 9.0 $2,760
Menace #1 (Bethlehem) CGC NM- 9.2 .....$4,025
Miss Fury #3 CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$1,840
Mister Mystery #11 (Bethlehem) NM- $4,600
Mister Mystery #18 (Beth) CGC NM- 9.2.....$3,220
Mysteries Weird and Strange #1 (Beth) VF $374
Myst Adventures #1 (Beth) CGC NM+ 9.6....$4,888
Mystery in Space #1 CGC VF+ 8.5.....$3,738
Mystery in Space #90 (Bethlehem) NM.....$431
Mystery Tales #12 (Bethlehem) VF.....$345
Mystic #5 (1941, San Fran) CGC VF/NM 9.0 .$3,738
Mystical Tales #7 (Atlas, 1957, Beth) NM $431
Night of Mystery nn (Avon, 1953) VF $403
Nightmare #11 (St. John, 1954, Bethlehem) VF$460
Out of the Shadows #13 (Bethlehem) NM- $604
Out/Shadows #5 (#1, Beth) CGC VF/NM 9.0$1,438
Out of This World #6 (Bethlehem) NM- $518
Outer Space #20 (Beth) CGC NM+ 9.6 .....$1,035
Pep #6 CGC VF- 7.5 .....$604
Pep #16 CGC VF 8.0.....$834
Phantom Lady #16 CGC NM- 9.2 .....$4,600
Phantom Stranger #1 FN/VF.....$1,208
Planet #53 CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$460
Power #3 (Mile High) CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$7,475
Power #4 (Mile High) CGC NM- 9.2 .....$7,188
Prison Riot #1 (Avon, 1952, Bethlehem) VF+...$288
Red Seal #18 (Chesler, 1946, River City) VF+...$322
Riot #4 (Atlas, 1956, Bethlehem) VF/NM $299
Rulah Jungle Goddess #21 (Cosmic Aero) VF-$431
Scrt Dry Eerie Adv nn (Spokane) CGC FN- ..$2,185
Secret Mysteries #16 (1954) CGC NM+ 9.6..$1,035
Shock Detective Cases #20 (Bethlehem) VF $230
Shocking Mys #53 (Beth) CGC NM+ 9 6.....$1,668
Space Adventures #14 (Beth) CGC NM 9.4 ....$690
Space Adventures #17 (Beth) CGC NM 9.4 ....$431
Space Adventures #18 (Beth) CGC NM 9.4 ....$374
Space Adventures #27 (Beth) CGC NM- 9.2...$719
Space Adventures #42 (Beth) CGC NM- 9.2...$633
Space War #1 (Beth) CGC NM+ 9.6 ....$1,323
Space War #4 (Bethlehem) CGC NM 9.4.....$334
Speed #39 (Harvey, MH) CGC NM 9.4.....$2,185
Spellbound #6 (Northford) CGC NM 9.0 .....$1,093
Spook #24 (Bethlehem) CGC NM 9.4.....$1,553
Spook #30 (Bethlehem) CGC NM- 9.2.....$719
Star Spangled #1 VG/FN $920
Startling #53 (Nedor, 1948) CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$575
Strange Adventures #1 CGC appNM- 9.2 ....$2,415
Strnge Adv #17 (Whte Mount) CGC NM- 9.2$2,875
Strange Mysteries #3 (1952, Beth) NM $575
Strng Sspne St #1 (Faw, Beth) CGC NM- 9.2 $3,738
Strange Tales #37 (Bethlehem) NM..... ... .$748
Strange Tales Annual #1 VF/VF+ $920
St Tales Unusual #1 (Atlas, 1955, Beth) VF-.....$322
St Tales Unusual #9 (Atlas, 1957, Beth) NM- ...$288
Strange Terrors #1 (Beth) CGC NM- 9.2.....$2,875
Strange Worlds #8 (Avon, 1952, Beth) VF+.....$546
Sub-Mariner #1 (1941) CGC VG 4.0 .....$12,075
Sub-Mariner #1 (1941) CGC FN+ 6.5.....$3,738
Sub-Mariner #3 (1941) CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$4,313
Sub-Mariner #9 (1943) CGC NM 9.4.....$7,188
Sub Mariner #25 (1948) VF+.....$834
Suspense #12 (Atlas, 1951, Nrthfrd) CGC VF+ $345
Suspense #25 (Atlas, 1952) VF.....$288
Sspense #5 (Cont, 1944, MH) CGC NM- 9.2 $5,463
Sspense #7 (Con, 1944, MH) CGC NM- 9.2 .$5,463
Sspense #11 (Cont, MH) CGC NM 9.4 .....$15,525
Tales of Suspense #1 VF $1,495
Tales of Suspense #39 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$4,600
Tales of the Myst Traveler #3 (Bethlehem) NM $661
Tales of the Unexpected #21 (Bethlehem) NM$403
Tales to Astonish #9 NM.....$604
Terrific #5 (Continental, 1944) CGC VF 8.0...$4,600
Thing #5 (Bethlehem) CGC NM 9.4.....$2,300
Thing #8 (Bethlehem) CGC NM+ 9.6 .....$3,105
This Mag Haunted #11 (Beth) CGC VF+ 8.5 ....$920
Thrilling #2 (Nova Scotia) VF+ $690
Tmb of Terror #14 (Harv File) CGC VF/NM 9.0 $288
Top Notch #9 CGC VF+ 8.5 .....$2,645
Unk Worlds #1 (ACG, 1960, Beth) VF/NM $719
USA #2 CGC NM 9.4 .....$9,775
USA #3 (Oleshefsky/Chicago) CGC NM 9.4..$7,475
USA #5 (Oleshefsky/Chicago) CGC NM- 9.2 $7,475
USA #9 (Oleshefsky/Chicago) CGC NM- 9.2 $9,200
Voodoo #19 (Ajax, 1955, Beth) CGC NM- 9.2 $805
Web of Mystery #13 (Bethlehem) NM-.....$460
Web of Mystery #4 (Bethlehem) VF+ $374
Web of Mystery #9 (Bethlehem) CGC NM- 9.2$575
Weird Adv #10 (ZiffDavis, Beth) CGC NM- 9.2$546
Weird Chills #1 (Bethlehem) VF $1,840
Weird Chills #2 CGC VF/NM 9.0.....$2,070
Weird Horrors #4 (St. John, Beth) VF/VF+ $265
Weird Mysteries #7 (Gillmore, 1953) VF- $604
Weird Thrillers #5 (Ziff-Davis, 1952, Beth) VF-.$575
Western Comics #59 (Mohawk Valley) NM-....$127
White Princess of The Jungle #3 (Beth) VF/NM$374
Witchcraft #5 FN+ $431
World of Fantasy #2 (Bethlehem) VF/NM $690
World of Mystery #6 (Bethlehem) VF/NM.....$403
World of Suspense #2 (Bethlehem) NM- $604
World's of Fear #10 (Bethlehem) VF-.....$1,495
Zip Comics #6 CGC VF/NM 9.0 .....$1,150
Zoot #16 (Cosmic Aeroplane) FN/VF $431
Zoot #7 FN/VF $374

MARKET REPORTS

(Continued from page 64)

comic book collectors than here in the USA. In Italy the focus seems to be more on reading than on being too hung up on condition as the main attribute for acquisition. Content over form. There is a greater appreciation of the earlier "classic" American material dating before World War II which I find very refreshing. I wowed more Europeans showing my copy of the 1842 Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck—the first comic book printed in America.

One can view the cover and a sample page in my Platinum Age article in the newest Overstreet Price Guide This past weekend I just got back from another comics show hosted by the Kansas City Comic Book Club. It was a fun little affair with sales brisk. With the onset of eBay, people are demanding more and more discounting.

I sold a pile of Classics Illustrated to one fellow including a couple of the CI record with a comic book sets produced in the early 1960s, an Atomic War #1 FN $200; Adventures Into Mystery #2 VG $30, #4 VG $25, #6 VG $23; Adventures Into Terror #18 GD/VG $22, #28 VG $22; Annie Oakley #6 VG+ $24; Gang World #5 (#1) VG+1952 $40; Some great Walt Kelly pieces like Christmas with Mother Goose FC #172 VG $35, FC #201 VF- $90, FC #253 VF+ $150; Wonder Comics #9 Fine $200.

Upcoming in May I will be at shows each weekend in Denver, Tulsa, Motor City and Big Easy in New Orleans. I'll let you know how things went. Till next time.

GREG WHITE • COMICS AND COLLECTIBLE

17 WEST MONUMENT AVENUE
KISSIMME, FL 34741
407•870•0400
whizzer@kua.com

Our sales have been average the past month. A few popular titles have moved on a steady basis. Foot traffic at the store has been steady but not exceptional. Florida's only large comic book convention was held this month. The word I have received from both dealers who set up and collectors who did attend was that sales and selection of vintage pre-1965 comic books were scarce. Seems old comic books don't bother to come to the show anymore. Seems old comic book shows may be over.

I did well in Europe with GA books but hardly anything else sold. At least there was interest and a number of serious books did sell! That doesn't happen for me at too many shows in the USA anymore. The new Guide is now out. There was some reduction in SA prices, but not enough in my opinion. GA was not trimmed to any degree either. Most books will still not sell for full Guide—thus I feel we need to see the prices at a lower level that is agreeable to collectors. Maybe next year.

Golden Age 1935-1955: A few DC moved but not much else. I looked at a terrific collection of over 110 Timely comics, however I have not been able to purchase it as the collector is hoping to get close to Overstreet for most of the books. Even pricing the books at 25% over Guide (which would make them difficult to sell) I would not have a sufficient mark-up.

Golden Age Sales: Batman #8 VG $500; Jingle Jangle #1 FN/VF $140; March Of Comics #3 FR $35; Police #19 VG $100.

Silver Age 1956-1969: I bought a nice group of DCs from the 1958-67 era. These had been put away the past 32 years. The original owner passed away in the Vietnam war and his Mom held onto them ever since. It's funny how so many collections have an interesting story all their own. Amazing Spider-Man was my best seller this month. DC comics also sold well. Dell, Charlton, Gold Key, Archie, and Harvey were very slow.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG $1,200; Brave & Bold #34 GD/VG $100; Daredevil #16 FN $45; Superman #85 GD/VG $40; Spin & Marty #8 FN $20.

Artwork and Toys I picked up a collection of recent comic art this month but nothing vintage came in. I get constant calls for SA Marvel and DC art. So little is affordable to the vast majority of collectors today. I did buy some boxed GI Joes from the 1960s this month along with a Matchbox and Hot Wheels collection. Those toys are always fun to have!

Artwork and Toys Sales: GI Joe Navy doll in box from 1969 $150; Matchhbox fire truck in box $25; various pieces of Disney animation $25-$50 each; Robin Aurora model sealed $150.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

NAIMAN REPORT CONT. FROM PG. 62

Greg Manning Auction

The recent auction by Greg Manning Auctions has really blown up with big prices paid for books by new non-comic collectors. It was reported to me by attendees that any and all slabbed items were being eagerly bid upon by "two coin guys" and at multiples of Guide too. This was one of the stated the purposes of the grading service... to bring new blood into the hobby... and it looks like it worked. The big questions are "Will prices hold up when the items are re-sold in the marketplace? Will the grades hold up? Will dealers be purchasing these books at full Guide+ from those collectors paying huge prices?" Time will tell.

Liberalized grading standards?

It's no secret that I've been rather vocal in the past few months regarding the new liberalized grading standards that I feel have been "foisted" upon the collecting community. I still contend that the new grading system was developed "by dealers for dealers." Also, some have called me "extremely cynical" about the recent changes going on in the hobby. The way I look at it, cynicism is just "reality with the volume turned up!"

But rest assured, I will continue to speak out in support of the collector and hobbyist... no matter what the topic. I know some feel uncomfortable discussing these grading (and other) issues in a public forum. As for me, I think it's a good thing and I believe open discussion will help the hobby survive into the next millennium... and not fall into the hands of specu-leaches and get-rich-quick folk who don't care a darnn about comic books or the hobby!

As that country western tune goes "...You've got to stand for something or you'll just fall for anything!" ■

FRED GUARDINEER

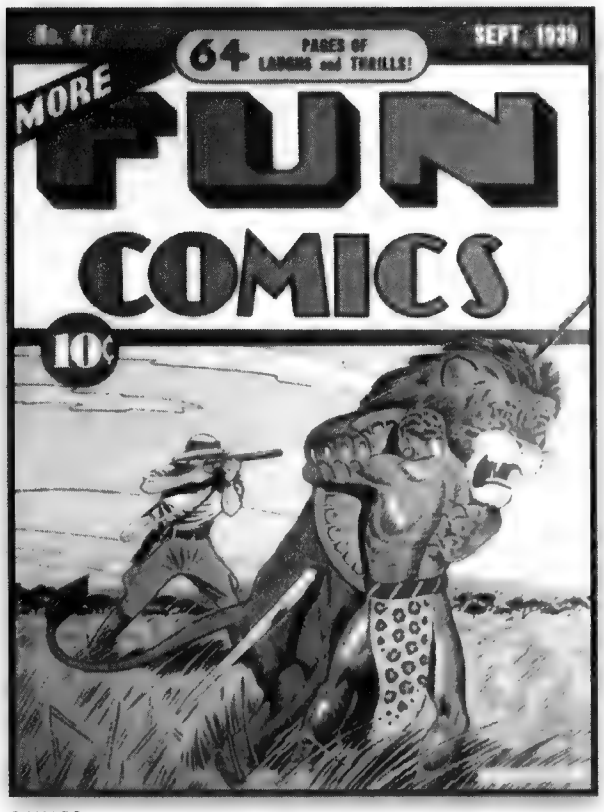
Continued from page 33

Every once in a while, as Fred scanned across the beautifully colored covers, an extra twinkle would glisten as his eyes came upon one of his own.

"I did this and this and this," he said proudly, pointing to the covers of *Adventure* #34, 35 and 45.

Turning to the *Action* pages, he pointed out the gorgeous Zatara covers that adorned *Action* #12 and 14.

"It was always a bit of a thrill when I got to put my own guy on the cover."



© 2000 DC

Like Adventure #34, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 45... More Fun #47 (ABOVE) featured a pith-helmeted precursor of Congo Bill

Overlooked by early collectors for years because of its non-Batman cover, Detective #32 presently Guides for a whopping $5,300 in Near Mint and is considered a Guardineer classic

THE EARLY DC DAYS

"One time I drew Superman. That was fun. Not too many people but the guys from Cleveland got to draw Superman. I drew the cover of *Action* #15 when Siegel was sick. I got Superman lifting up the submarine and I got Zatara looking out the window. I snuck him in the sub."

Some people want to know if you drew the cover of *Double Action Comics*?

"No. I don't remember that. That's not my stuff."

What do you remember about Zatara? Were you fond of him?

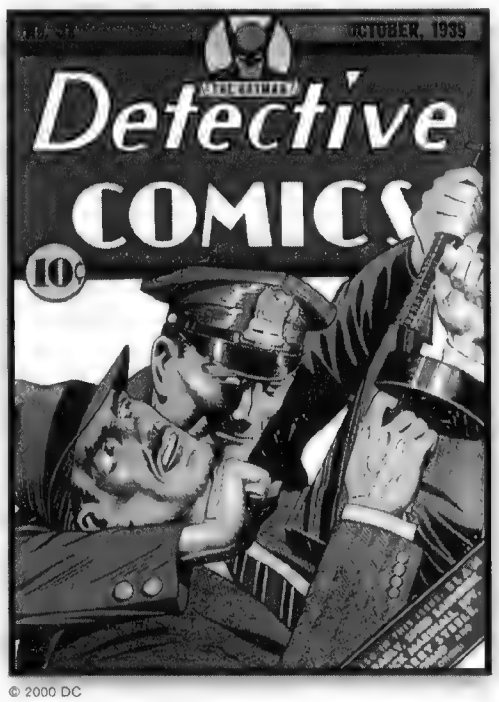
"He paid the rent. I didn't care for that stuff. I liked doing detective, and cowboys and Indians. I didn't give a damn about the magicians."

Really? You did a lot of magicians.

"I know. I was labeled for a magician artist. I wanted it like a hole in the head but everyone kept saying 'give him the magicians,' so what the hell. I made the best of it."

What were those early days like?

"It was pretty exciting then. We had the three comics that were doing well and they decided that they needed a fourth magazine. *Action Comics* was the fourth magazine. They put it all together, then they found out they were missing four pages in the middle, so I quickly did a four page story called 'Pep Morgan.' So now I'm famous for having two features in the first edition of *Action Comics*."



© 2000 DC

Did you write the Pep Morgan?

"I don't remember. I might have. He was a boxer. I was the featherweight champion of upstate New York, so it was right up my alley. Most of the time Gardner Fox was the writer. I didn't mind writing stuff, once in a while I got a good idea or something good to steal. But, I rather enjoyed getting the script. It was just like a movie script, with actors talking, where they were, what the background was, whether they were indoors or outdoors. I just followed the story. I enjoyed it."

Did you approach the script in a certain way to try and get the best story?

"Yes. I read the story to see what I had to look for and I went through it page by page, as the story was divided up. I knew about what I was going to have. At the same time I kept a huge morgue. I learned to have a morgue. Pictures and stuff that I could steal from. But it wouldn't be that crude, it would be what I'd need for reference, really. If I needed horses and stagecoaches and people talking or people making love, I'd go through my files on that stuff.

"I roughed the whole page on a piece of tracing paper. I placed it right on the piece of paper I was going to draw. I knew what was going to be a big picture or a small picture or a distance shot or a close up. I divided it up into the panels, usually guided by how much they had to say. How big the balloons were going to be.

"So I'd have the whole story done on tracing paper, in a very rough form, then I'd lay my good sheet of paper on top and roughly trace out the panels and figures and where the lettering would be.

"When I got all the pages in that set up, the hard part was really done for me. The rest was just drawing. I then went to work and penciled the whole thing and did the lettering."

You did the lettering also?

"Oh, yes."

And you inked it also?

"Yes (*Laughter*). In those days there was nobody else. They expected that if you were going to do a strip you'd do the whole bit. The color was done at the printing office. Although sometimes the proofs came back and I'd color a few things to conform to the story so the colorist would know what to do."

How would you describe your style of art?

(*Laughter*) "I couldn't say how I'd describe it. I just tried to do the best I could whenever I drew anything. I'm looking at my stuff down there now."

Looks pretty good, doesn't it?

(*Laughter*) "Jesus Christ, I didn't know it was that good! For a while, when I was just starting, and got these magazine going, *Action* and *Detective* and so forth, you had to draw really faster than you could do a good job. In order to make a decent living, I had to account for a page and a half a day. So I had to figure a way to get my pictures done and still have them come out good. For a while, I actually drew with a pen, like a Speedball, laid a heavy line around the figure so nothing was lost in the printing.

Fred Guardineer and Creig Flessel after a day of fishing on Long Island, circa 1940

A sample of Fred's original art published in The Long Island Fisherman

"Then I combined that with my weapon that I used all my life, a Windsor-Newton #3 camel hair brush. I could dip it in the ink and twirl it to a point. I did most all of my stuff with a brush. Sometimes you don't have real control with a brush, but it's great for clothes and folds.

"While I was developing this, my stuff reproduced excellently because I had a heavy outline. Whenever they put a contest in there for kids to draw something, they always did my stuff because it was easy. They could copy my outline rather than some fancy line.

"It developed into something that was real good and fast. My technique was that I had it penciled very well, down to the last bullet, and then I went through the page with a flexible pen point. I would do all the faces, all the hands, all the guns, anything where you needed stuff to be exact. That would include the harness on the horse, where it comes down around its mouth. Then I'd go through with the #3 brush, my weapon, and I'd do the hair and details."

Did you enjoy your time working for DC?

"Yeah, but they were hard. You signed your life away. On the back of every paycheck was a labor contract. I got along with them but it was hard work. They were good business men, but after a while you couldn't stomach some of the things."

What are your memories of Siegel and Shuster? Did you get to know them very well.

"No. I met them and liked them. But outside of the artists that you'd meet in a place like Chesler's, you never got to know anybody else. Each artist had his own studio or did his work in his own home. When he came to the city he'd bring the work into the publisher, that'd be the only time you'd see them. My best friends were Flessel and Sullivan, the guys I met back at Chesler's. All the fellas I met there."

THE YEARS OF QUALITY

When did you leave DC?

"Well, you could say Sullivan lured me away. He was doing another book. But it didn't work out too good. So I was out on my ass, trying to sell stuff again. But with no problem this time. I knew all the editors. So I'd bring stuff into one publisher, and he'd be in the throes of dying, so I'd go across the street to another one and get a job.

"So I had plenty of work. And by this time I was doing it on Long Island. I went into the city when the stuff was done."

Is that when you started working for Quality Comics?

"Yes. Quality came along. They paid about the best and they were nice. That's when I met with "Busy" Arnold and Bill Eisner. They were up in Stamford, Connecticut, so I went up to Connecticut to see them and sell my stuff.

"In those days, Arnold put out a supplement to go in the Sunday papers and Eisner did *The Spirit* on the front. Arnold wanted me to do a magician strip, of course. So I did *Mr. Mystic*."

So you got stuck with another magician?

"I got stuck with another magician. But it paid well, so what the hell? So Eisner and I were both working for

Arnold. I never worked directly for Eisner. At the same time as *The Spirit*, Eisner was running a studio with other artists."

Were you ever asked to work at the Eisner studio?

"Oh, no. I used to hide away from it. Eisner and Iger were the dirtiest names in the business. The guys working for them freelanced, but because they worked in that studio, they had to give a percentage of their pay to Eisner and Iger. They felt like they were agents. They'd get work for these guys and then demand their pound of flesh. In our opinion, they were like thieves. It was perfectly legal, but it didn't set well with a freelance artist. Maybe their artists were happy, but I stayed away from them. Merely from talking to my friends, Eisner and Iger were dirty words."

The obscure and esoteric title, Manhunt, (#8, May 1948 above) was published by Magazine Enterprises (ME). Numerous issues were a showcase for Guardineer western art

Did you and Eisner get along well?

"Sure. He was a helluva nice guy. I just never wanted to work for him. You know he's still in the business? He's good."

Did you follow the other artists' work at that time?

"No. I didn't follow them. But I liked Tarzan of the Apes and Prince Valiant. They were the two strips that I'd bother to look at. I didn't follow the work of any other artists unless my stuff was in the same book. I liked Flessel's work, since he was my friend.

"One of the other guys I knew, who I liked, was Bert Christman. Christman was at Chesler's. Later, he drew a strip called *The Sandman*. He enlisted in the Air Force, in what was the Flying Tigers and got shot down and killed. Ever since then, Creig Flessel drew *The Sandman*. Many people think it's his, but it was Christman's. But after he died, whenever they wanted *The Sandman*, they'd call Flessel.

"Now it seems that the world is searching for someone who knew Christman before he died. I didn't know him too well. We were busy. He sat there and drew while I sat here and drew, but I remember him."

Like the careers of so many artist from the Golden Age, Fred's was interrupted by a draft notice. At Quality, he produced a large body of beautiful work. In addition to his *Mr. Mystic* strip, he also contributed *The Blue Tracer* for *Military Comics*, *The Mouthpiece* for *Police* and *The Marksman* in *Smash*.

From underneath his bed, Fred pulled out two dusty photo-diaries of his war years. Opening the first page, I could see the draft notice, dated March 6, 1944, that pulled Frederic Blessing Guardineer away from his wife and infant son and sent him off to war. Following this appeared an article in the local paper, confirming that the artist and creator of the popular Mr. Mystic had been drafted.

What followed next was a remarkable illustrated diary of every experience of Fred's war years. Penciled on 4"x 5" faded brown sheets of paper, Fred had chronicled his GI story. Beautifully rendered drawings of "sleeping quarters" and "convoy" shared space with "night in the foxhole," "guard duty," and "seasick."

The drawings were mesmerizing, created with more passion than Fred could ever have given a written magician script. Amongst these penciled diary entries was a gorgeous portrait of Fred during the war, drawn by Ogden Whitney, and the most chilling section of the book, "Unclaimed Portraits."

"When guys found out I could draw, they'd give me a photo of their girl and ask me to draw it for them," Fred explained, pointing to the crumpled black and white photos that were pasted to the bottom corners of the penciled and fully-colored portraits. "Unfortunately, sometimes the guys would never come back to pick up the finished work because they were shipped off or killed. So I kept them all here for them. For their memories."

THE WAR YEARS

So you were drafted while you were at Quality?

"Yeah, I was doing this strip in the supplement. It was doing real well. We had about 40 papers. I did the whole thing on my strip, the story, art, lettering. So when I was drafted, the whole thing was just gone. There was nobody left to keep it going."

What'd you do during the war?

"I didn't know what the hell they were doing drafting me. I was thirty-years-old and I had a kid. But I had to go. My friends told me to stay the hell away from the combat engineers. It was the toughest thing in the world. So the first place I woke up was Fort Belvoir, combat engineering. I went through their basic course. Then one day they yanked me out of there and put me in the art division and Ogden Whitney was there. He was with me the whole time. We stayed together the rest of the war.

"The next thing you know we're on a ship heading into the South Pacific.

"It was funny how it happened. Since I went to college, I was slated to go to OCS and become an officer. Then the order came down from General MacArthur. He was looking to set up a printing plant in Manila once they took

DEVIL OF THE DEEP

DAVE DEAN, PROFESSIONAL DIVER AND ADVENTURER, DARES THE PERILS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC SEAS IN SEARCH OF PEARLS ... *BY FRED GUARDINEER, 35 YEARS LATER!*

WHAT IF THEM NATIVES ARE RIGHT AND THERE'S *GHOSTS* IN THESE WATERS? IT'S A NEW AREA.

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING! *WATER GHOSTS* – HMMPH! I'M LOOKING FOR PEARLS, THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A HOT SPOT!

I'D FEEL BETTER IF WING PO WASN'T AROUND ON HIS JUNK!

WHAT CAN HE DO? HE HAS NO DIVING EQUIPMENT! STOP WORRYING!

DOWN YOU GO- AND GOOD LUCK! IF YOU SEE ANY-THING, SIGNAL AND I'LL PULL YOU UP!

ABOARD WING PO'S JUNK...

THE FOOL! MAY THE DEVIL OF THE DEEP TAKE HIM!

MAYBE IF I GET CLOSE -

NEVER MIND HIM! FIND ME PEARLS. WE SHALL TAKE CARE OF HIM LATER. IF HIS AIR HOSE WAS CUT, ALL THESE PEARLS WOULD BE MINE!

HERE COMES COM-PANY! THAT YACHT'S BEEN HERE BEFORE!

THE PRIVATE YACHT ANCHORS NEARBY IN THE DIVING AREA...

THAT DAVE DEAN IS NICE LOOKING, PHIL. I SAW HIM THROUGH THE GLASSES. HE MUST BE BRAVE TO DIVE LIKE THAT!

SORRY, JANE, I CAN'T SEE IT! MY COUSIN WAS DROWNED IN THIS SPOT. I WAS ALONE WHEN HIS BOAT SANK.

BUT HE'S GOOD LOOKING AND I HOPE I CAN MEET HIM!

DOWN ON THE OCEAN FLOOR, DAVE DEAN DISCOVERS A SUNKEN YACHT...

HELLO! WHAT'S THIS?

1

...AS A WEIRD MENACE HOVERS NEAR.

BACK ABOARD DAVE'S SHIP...

IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! DON'T GO DOWN!

I'LL BRING THAT DEVIL UP WITH ME!

AS SOON AS DAVE REACHES BOTTOM HE IS ATTACKED...

HE'S COMING! BUT DON'T PULL ME UP TILL I GIVE THE WORD!

A FIERCE UNDERWATER BATTLE TAKES PLACE...

SEND DOWN ANOTHER LINE AND TAKE THIS ONE UP. YOU'LL FIND THE WATERGHOST AT THE END OF IT!

DAVE EXPLORES THE INSIDE OF THE SUNKEN YACHT.

BACK ON DECK...

HE DIDN'T WANT ME TO SEE THE SUNKEN BOAT BECAUSE HE SANK IT!

HE'S NOT DEAD. THERE WAS OXYGEN IN HIS FREE DIVING SUIT!

HE DYNAMITED HIS COUSIN'S YACHT AND TRIED TO SCARE ME AWAY SO I WOULDN'T FIND OUT.

BUT HE WON'T SAVE HIMSELF THIS TIME! TO GET HIS COUSIN'S FORTUNE!

THAT OUGHT TO DO IT!

THE END

the Philippines back. He wanted it in place for the invasion of Japan so he could do the paperwork there.

"So they were looking for a certain number of men from all over the country who had 10 years of experience in printing and art and Whitney and I were picked. But first I had to pull my papers out of OCS and give up being an officer in order to stay an enlisted man and an artist. Which I thought made sense. I was an artist after all.

"By this time, I was also an expert at demolitions. Anything you wanted blown away I could do it for you. Nice little jobs (*Laughter*). Go in at night and remove the land mines from where all the guys were going to come in the next day on their boats, for God's sake. It wasn't easy.

"So the outfit was formed. Lines of typers, engravers and printers, eight artists and so on. We had about 200 men, kept separate most of the time for MacArthur to use, but fill in at all times, repairing roads, unloading ships, fighting in the lines, any place they needed 200 guys in a hurry. We were first of all riflemen, and then artists.

"So, eventually we landed on the Philippines. The Japanese had their whole damn fleet there and so did the United States. There were more ships there than any other battle ever fought. Two ships would come around an island, neither knowing the other one was there, and they'd come around, run along side by side and whoever shot first blew the other out of the water.

"I was part of the invasion. I saw action right there on the beach. I got two combat stars. We set up a tent to make signs because the invasion force needed to know which way to go. So we have our tent set up and paint and placards and all, but they forgot to give us paint brushes. How are you supposed to paint signs without paint brushes? We started looking around for something to use. They'd been pounding this island for a couple of weeks so there wasn't a tree standing, but coconuts were everywhere, and they're hairy. So we'd take the coconut fronds, which was just like heavy twine, and put a rubber band around it and stick it in a can of paint and it'd stay stiff.

"So there we were, Ogden and me, in a tent on the beach, sitting on empty gas cans, every once in a while a shell would come through our tent and we're painting signs for the invasion with coconut fronds.

"So we take Manila, build the plant and then the bomb's dropped and we go home."

What happened to Ogden then?

"I don't know. Ogden was a drunk. He killed himself drinking. I never saw him after the war."

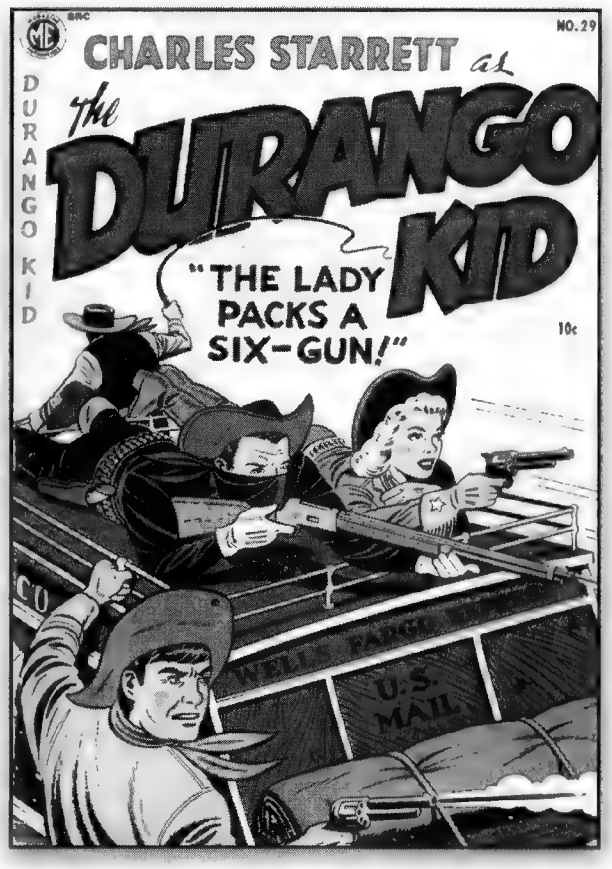
PAGES 71 & 72: Two extremely rare and beautifully rendered early original art pages from Fred Guardineer's "Devil of the Deep"

THE FINAL YEARS OF COMIC BOOKS

"After the war I went back into comic books. I went back to "Busy" Arnold, who dutifully gave me a strip to do and I loused it up. I wasn't that good anymore. I just couldn't draw it as good as I wanted to. So I guess I was more or less fired.

"So I went around. All my friends, who had worked alongside me were now editors and publishers. Mostly after the war I did crime stories. Bob Wood and Charlie Biro had these crime comics. They were the best on the market. They were all friends of mine. They gave me all the work I could want. So I did crime comics. I enjoyed that. It was good guy/bad guy, shooting and killing and a good detective story.

"One day I went up to see my old friend Vin Sullivan who was now running another company. He gave me the *Durango Kid* to do. Which was a very good job. I did the covers and the insides. The stories were written. I did it for three years. I worked my ass off on that, to try to have one last chance to have a hit like *Superman* or *Batman*, but it didn't catch on anything like that. (*Laughter*) I just know today when these people come up and tell me that I'm their favorite artist, how much they like my work, that part paid off. Cause I tried my best on the *Durango Kid*. I tried the hardest."



Another classic from Vin Sullivan's Magazine Enterprises, Durango Kid featured some of Guardineer's best pre-Code western genre work

What was it like working with Vin Sullivan again?

"Very good. We were good friends. It was nice just to come in."

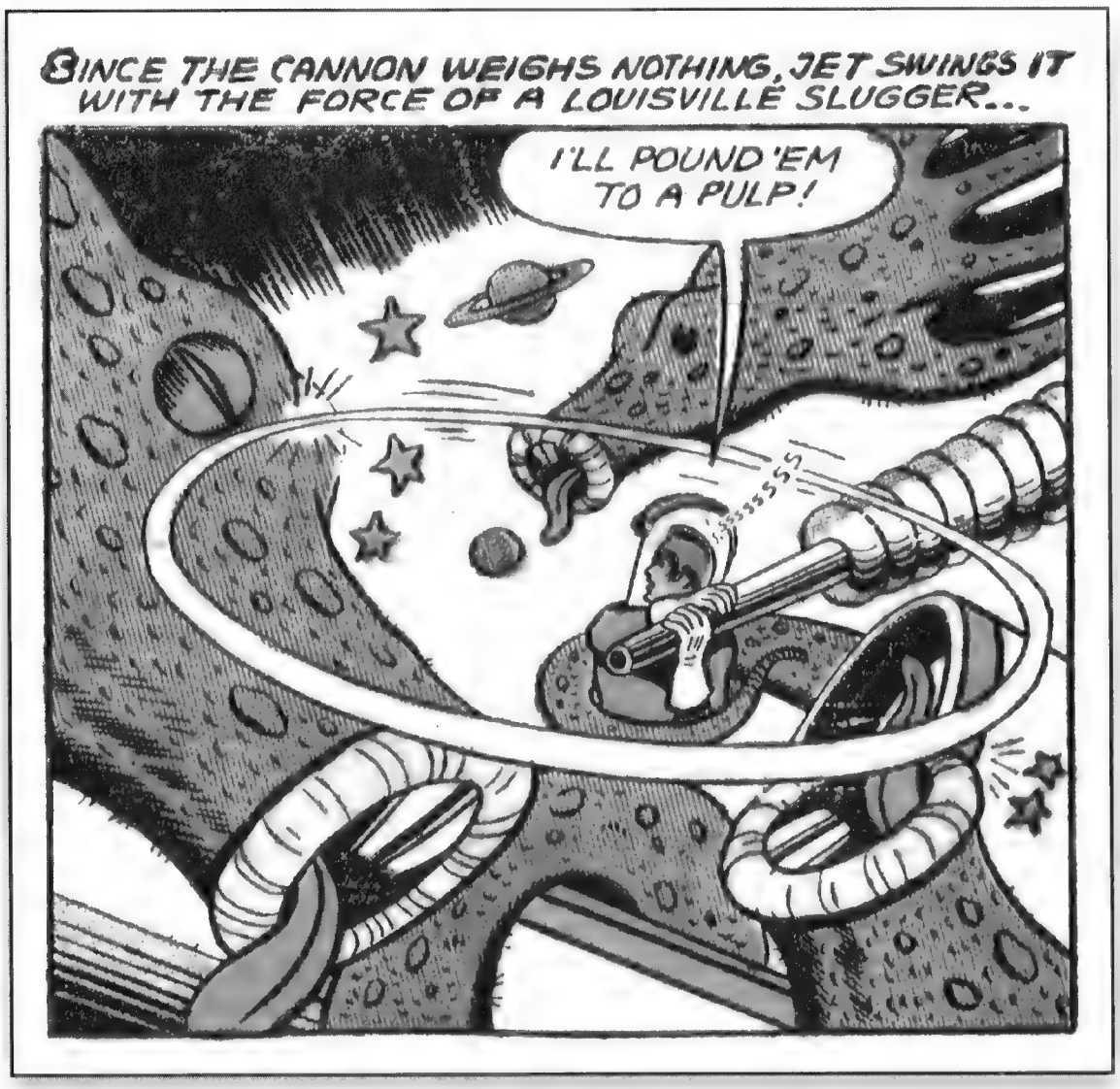
Did you like the work at Gleason?

"Yeah. I like working with Charlie Biro and Bob Wood. Bob wound up getting into a lot of trouble. He drank a lot. He was at a party, he was drunk or something, and he hit a girl over the head with a bottle and killed her. He had to go to prison for that. When he got out, I'd look him up when I went into the city. Then it all ended. He rolled in the gutter and a truck ran over him. That killed him."

What was Charlie Biro like?

"He was another good friend. He and Bob had both

been in Chesler's. He was easy to get along with. He used to fly his seaplane out to my place, land down on my bay and bring me some pencils to be inked. Biro had a different way of doing things. They had a Japanese letterer who was very good. He did all the lettering for Gleason magazines, so it was all uniform and good. So you always brought in the pencils when you were working for Biro/Wood and the guy would letter them up and you'd get the pencils back to be inked.



Guardineer's strip, Space Ace, began as a backup feature in Manhunt #1 through 7. Later, ME decided to publish the character in its own title as a part of the A-1 series

"I was living out on Long Island and my father-in-law owned some hothouses out there and he used to go out and check on them. Biro would give him pencils to deliver to me. I knew the train didn't stop, so I'd be up on the platform and the train is going by and there I am, running along side of the train and my father-in-law was inside the train, handing me the pencils through the open window. I'd get a big roll, half a dozen sheets or more and I'd go home and ink them. That's the way we lived."

Fred's work in this later half of his career is seen by many as his best. He flourished working on *Crime Does not Pay*, and the more cerebral *Who Dunnit*. Fred had a knack for drawing faces. He could create the most amazing characters, each with distinct personalities. This talent flourished on the crime stories with their large casts of characters and the need for individuality of the drawings in order to let the reader solve the crime.

While at Magazine Enterprises, Fred drew *Space Ace* and *Trail Colt*. But it is *The Durango Kid* that is universally regarded as the best work of his career, highlighted by dynamic covers and his famous "posterboard" storytelling.

LIFE AFTER COMICS

So finally after working for Vin you decided to retire?

"Well let's say that it sort of retired from me. Now I'm getting to be forty-years-old and television is going around the country. There was no job that was capable of giving me a pension. By living out on the Island, my friends came to be guys who came to the house, like the mailman. So I was thinking that if I could pass the civil service test I could go into the post office because my Army time would count towards a pension. So, I went down to the postmaster and just like that I was hired."

Was it hard to leave comics?

"No. It was getting to be a pain in the ass. *Durango Kid* had failed. Sullivan was going out of business. Television had swept the country. People weren't buying it. Too many magazines and not enough people. It wasn't like the old days. And I didn't like the way comics were going from good and bad guys to these supernatural guys with capes. I didn't like any of that stuff. I didn't like the way they looked or what they were doing.

"I always wanted to draw outside nature stuff and animals. So there was this magazine called *The Long Island Fisherman*. I could draw stuff for them using a comic book format. I wanted to do stuff like that. Fish and bait. I really enjoyed that.

"The post office was the last place I expected to do any drawing but I was in demand all the time. They had no category for me as an artist, I was a regular carrier. I had a route and I could do it, but most of the time, they'd keep me in. I'd rack up my route, getting it tied out, ready to be delivered, then they'd have somebody deliver it and I'd stay in and work on whatever project they had for me. They had me doing all kinds of things."

Did you ever think about going back to comics?

"Eisner invited me come back and work for him. He called me up and asked. I took off a couple of days and

drove up to see him, and Eisner and I had supper with his wife in his house. He wanted me to come back to it and work for him and his studio.

"I spent half a day there. But I decided I didn't like it anymore. I didn't like coming into the city anymore, riding the Goddamned train. I didn't want to do his comic and I walked out.

"Then, 50 years later, I see Eisner down in San Diego and told him I was sorry for walking out on him. I said, 'Eisner, look I came back. It's only been 50 years.' He laughed."

Over the years of your retirement, when you looked back on your comic book days, what were your favorite times?

(*Laughter*) "In the early beginning, working with Chesler, and falling right into it and just loving it. And then he liked my work, too. I guess I liked everything I drew. I really tried to lay it down good."

How would you like to be remembered as an artist?

"Well, its been 50 years or so, and I guess I'm happiest to know that the people who read my stuff seemed to admire it and like my work. I can't ask for anything better than that. I tried to please my public. I always did."

Did you ever think comic books would last this long?

"Oh sure. I thought they were an ideal way of presenting a story. People liked it."

Right now, when we collectors think back to those early days, the Chesler days, we tend to think about it as a magical time. All these very creative men, feeding ideas off each other and creating these wonderful stories. Was it magical for you back then?

"It was hard work but we liked to do it. Getting the stories out on the stands. They took off more than anybody ever thought they would. One of my doctors here came from China. He said he got off the boat in 1958 and what taught him English was comic magazines. He could read them and put the words together with the pictures and so on. He was a fan of my stuff.

"It was good, but I really loved fishing. I had a radio program for about six years on fishing. A daily fishing program."

So your first love has always been fishing and nature?

"Yes. I liked to draw that. I did what I did in New York to survive, but I lived for fishing and nature."

Do you ever draw any more?

"No, I just can't do it anymore. I don't want to do it. I dropped the whole bit anyways, when my wife died in '87. But I had a good life. I can't say I have any regrets. It was always a fun time."

With that I rose from my stool and shook Fred's hand. We made plans to have a steak dinner together next week. Fred loves a steak dinner and there happens to be a good steakhouse in our hometown.

As I walked towards the front door, I happened to catch a glance at a new issue of *The Fisherman* on Fred's counter.

Proudly, Fred grabbed the magazine and opened it. "They're still using my filler sketches in here," he said, pointing to an inked drawing of a large bass. "I drew these more than 20 years ago and they still use them. Whenever a story doesn't fill up the whole page, they'll print one of my fish as a filler."

Slowly, Fred put the magazine back down. He turned to me, smiling mischievously and said, "I do have one piece of original art here. Do you want to see it?"

I nodded as Fred reached over and pulled a yellowing sheet of art paper from behind his television. Labeled, "How to Bait Your Hook," the page featured a hodge-podge of different baits, crickets and nightcrawlers and such, with written descriptions of how to hook them.

Fred looked proudly at his artwork and I could see how much he had enjoyed creating it. I smiled with him. Somehow it seemed fitting to me that the only piece of original art that one of the greatest comic book artists of the Golden Age decided to own, was a simple text piece on fishing.

Fred Guardineer's Space Ace is renowned among collectors because it contains some of the most bizarre and classic 1950's sci-fi art ever done. Space Ace #5 (A-1 #61) presently Guides for $52 in GD and $157 in FN. Genuine NM copies are rare and usually bring a premium above the $420 NM price. (Values per Overstreet #30.)

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Continued from page 9

of virtually all the books with April dates that he inadvertently left out. There may be a couple I overlooked for some reason, since I did this rather quickly. If he would like one of Dan Stevenson's detailed 1956 title-by-title indexes, Steve can write to me via CBM and I'll put him in touch with Dan.

I listed only books with April in the date, with a couple of exceptions. As far as comics with only March or May in the date, there are many more, especially by Charlton and Atlas, that Steve might need to consider for his want list—especially since he had only a partial list of Charlton's March, April and May dates. In 1956, Charlton had the most erratic schedule of all publishers, and a great many of its titles skipped from February dates to June dates. Charlton did not publish any monthly titles at that time.

The primary problem collecting specific "date" comics is how to handle bi-monthly issues from the likes of Charlton. In 1956, DC was still putting "March-April" or "April-May" on the covers of all of its bi-monthly issues, so that makes it easy. But DC then started listing bi-monthly titles by the second month only on the cover. For example, my first comic, Mystery In Space #32, was listed as June/July in the indicia but only July on the cover.

On the other hand, Atlas listed only one month on all of its titles, so you have to assume that the Atlas bi-monthly issues for March or May need to be listed in any index of April titles. In some cases, it would be impossible to determine which issues should be considered "March/ April" and which should be considered "April/May."

Dan Stevenson contends (for logical reasons) that a comic with "March/April" listed on the cover should be indexed as March, since that is closer to the actual date of publication. In his year-by-year indexes, he lists December/January issues as being dated in the year represented by December. In my yearly collection listings, however, I list such comics by their second month, simply because that's what DC did starting in mid-1956.

It also should be noted that any March comic (whether it's, say, a DC known to be February/March or whether it's an Atlas or Charlton bi-monthly listed as March) may well not have been on the stands along with monthly April titles. I know this because I was there to buy them, and for many years I carefully wrote the date on which I bought all my comics at the top of the front page. (I can hear all the condition collectors screaming, but I treasure those notations!)

For example, DC's April/May bi-monthly titles were on the stands concurrently with its April monthly titles. When the Comics Code Authority came in, the monthly comics with March dates were the first DCs to carry the Code symbol, but the February/March bi-monthly issues did not. It wasn't until the March/April issues that DC bi-monthly issues carried the Code symbol.

Another point: I don't know if this was true around the nation, but where I grew up in the 1950s (the San Francisco Bay Area), comics were not usually removed from the stands by their dates, but by the color codes sprayed at the edges of the comics. I know this because one of my very first jobs was to remove all the "red" or "blue" or "green" sprayed comics each week from my local drugstores. I finagled this job with each of them in order not only to get first crack at the new comics each Tuesday, but to get a few free ones each time! I was never turned down by any druggist I ever approached for this job, but no supermarket ever took me up on my offer!

Bet you never thought something like collecting "dates" could get so complicated!

Here is the list of nearly 60 "missing" April 1956 issues. They are dated April unless otherwise indicated.

Atomic Mouse #17 (March, Charlton); Boots and Her Buddies #3 (Argo); Bride's Romance #19 (Quality); Buzzy #70 (March-April, DC) (Yes, THAT Buzzy #70!); Candy #62 (Quality); Captain Easy #1 (Argo); Captain Steve Savage #12 (March-April, Avon); Confessions of the Lovelorn #69 (ACG); Diary Confessions #14 (Stanmoor); Elmer Fudd #689 (Four Color Dell, March); Exotic Romances #28 (Quality); Freckles and Her Friends #3 (Argo); Girls in Love #53 (Quality); Headline Comics #75 (March-April, Prize); I Love Lucy #9 (February-April, Dell); Indian Chief #22 (April-June, Dell); Judge Parker #2 (Argo); Justice Traps the Guilty #81 (April-May, Prize); Little Eva #24 (St. John); Love at First Sight #40 (Ace); Love Confessions #50 (Quality); Love Experiences #37 (Ace); Love Letters #47 (Quality); Love Secrets #52 (Quality); Love Tales #67 (Atlas); Lovers #77 (Atlas); Marmaduke Mouse #60 (Quality); Masked Raider #4 (Charlton); My Love Story #1 (Atlas); Navy Task Force #8 (Stanmoor); Nyoka the Jungle Girl #16 (Charlton); Patty Powers #5 (Atlas); Peter Panda #17 (April-May, DC); Peter Rabbit #32 (April-May, Avon); Prize Comics Western #116 (March-April, Prize); Real Love #73 (Ace); Rex Morgan #3 (Argo); Riot #5 (Atlas); Romantic Adventures #65 (ACG, also called My Romantic Adventures); Romantic Secrets #7 (Charlton); Slugger #1 (Lev Gleason); Story Of Martha Wayne #1 (Argo); Super Duck #67 (Archie); Supermouse the Big Cheese #35 (Standard/Pines); Sweetheart Diary #33 (Charlton); Sweethearts #34 (Charlton); T-Man #34 (Quality); Tales of Justice #59 (Atlas); Tom Cat #4 (Charlton); True Tales of Love #22 (Atlas); Turok Son of Stone #3 (March-May, Dell); U.S. Fighting Air Force #23 (Superior); Wedding Bells #16 (Quality); Wild Bill Hickok #27 (Avon); Young Brides #27 (Prize); Young Love #70 (April-May, Prize); Young Romance #82 (April-May, Prize).

The following books also may belong on the list, but I can't immediately check them: Abbott & Costello (St. John), Black Fury (Charlton), Fritzi Ritz (St. John), Lil' Genius (Charlton), and Ramar of the Jungle (Charlton).

The following are corrections: Cisco Kid should be #31, April-June; Hopalong Cassidy should be #112, April; Little Dot should be #16 (correcting a typo); Little Iodine should be #32 (also correcting a typo); Mazie #21 should be listed as Harvey, not Archie.

Finally, Little Archie #1 is undated, but I am positive this issue was published long after April, much less being dated April. I bought this issue off the stands sometime in either the summer or early autumn of 1956, and I'm pretty sure I bought it the week it came out, since from the age of 8 I never let more than a week go by without checking all of a half-dozen comics retailers in my general neighborhood.

As I said, I also can provide a list, thanks to Dan Stevenson, of all the non-monthly titles from 1956.

I hope this helps! And thanks again, Steve, for sharing your collection! Sincerely,

Michelle Nolan, California

Which is more desirable?

Keep up the great work, I can't read enough articles about esoteric Golden Age titles and Atomic Age books in general.

I'm sure all five Atlas-Seaboard fans out there appreciated the cover gallery in CBM #77, okay so I looked through it, and, yes, read the accompanying articles, but that doesn't mean I liked it. Sorry, but having passed through adolescence in the 1970s, I will always associate the Bronze Age with declining quality, rising prices and starting in 1975 a ten-year hiatus from collecting comics, except undergrounds.

I personally haven't seen any CGC graded books first hand, so I can't comment on the consistency of their grading, and I don't feel the need to validate my own grading by sending them anything to grade for me, but if I were selling a high dollar ($1,000+) comic on eBay, especially a high grade book, I might use their services just to put the potential buyer's mind at ease regarding grade and more importantly restoration. I would also feel more comfortable bidding on an expensive book being sold by someone other than a reputable dealer, if I felt confident it had not been restored. While a lot of information regarding condition can be gleaned from a decent scan combined with a detailed description, restoration is often difficult to detect even when the book is in hand. It seems obvious that the Internet will be the driving force behind any success CGC may have.

Qualified" grades are another matter. A VF book with missing pages is obviously not a VF book, but is merely describing it as poor or fair really more accurate? "Qualified VF" seems like just another way of saying "o/w VF", the sort of designation that irritates some collectors, but that many of us have found quite useful. Would it lessen confusion if CGC used the description "Qualified FAIR, page missing, otherwise VF"?

This just points out the difficulty in grading books that don't have common defects. After all, which is more desirable, a Suspense #3 with a bright, clean, defect free front cover, but missing the centerfold, or a complete issue with a creased and somewhat faded cover?

I think many would prefer the incomplete copy, since the value of the book is almost entirely in the cover art. Conversely, someone interested primarily in reading copies of a given title, would be more concerned with completeness than condition, but might not be concerned at all about a missing ad page. Even though the current grading system was designed as a shorthand for describing condition, it is not always an adequate way of describing a book.

Richard Byard, Los Angeles

Hamilton, Ontario comic club

I belong to a comic collectors club in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and would like to network with other clubs in Canada or the US. Please could you give out this e-mail address to other clubs? it's cancomic@idirect.com. Thanks!

Del Murchison, Ontario, Canada

Do they exist?

For a number of years I have been trying to put together a complete run of Fox books. After reading Michelle Nolan's articles and talking with other collectors, I picked up the phone and called the people in charge of the Overstreet Guide. They were very nice but didn't know the answer to my question… so they advised me to talk to CBM.

I have just learned from CBM #77 that Romeo Tubbs #27 does exist but was published by Green in 1952. Was Green Publishing another name used by Fox? Can any CBM reader out there tell me if the following books exist, because you will be saving this collector a lot of time.

Blue Beetle #43; Famous Crimes #52; Feature Stories Magazine #4 (I did read Mike Browning's letter in CBM #72); Full Color Comics (NN); Jungle Jo #4-6; Rangebusters #1; Rocketship X (NN); They Ring The Bell #1; Weekly Comic Magazine #1, 2; Western Killers #6; Western Killers (NN)… My copy starts in the middle of a

We'd like you to write for us!

Contact the CBM Editorial Department

619•437•1996

Rangebusters story as reported in CBM #76 by Scott Milliken.

My copies of "My Secret Life 27" and "My Love Life 13" are both dated September 1951. I also have a copy of Tennessee Jed (NN). In the Guide there is a question mark next to Fox (whether this was published by him).

One more book to talk about is a Fox Giant. I believe that Secret Love and Secret Love Stories are one in the same. The couple's heads are blocking out the word "Stories", and that is where the confusion comes in. If anyone can help, it would be greatly appreciated.

Larry Yasgar, Connecticut

1944 Tops Comics

Here's the cover to the first issue of Doc Savage Magazine from March 1933. This first story was titled "Man of Bronze." When these pulp magazine stories were reprinted in paperback form by Bantam books starting in 1964, the stories were not printed in the same order in which they originally appeared. The exception was the first story. Bantam books reprinted Man of Bronze as #1 of their series. Quite different conceptions.

When the paperbacks appeared I always wondered at the fact that Doc's shirt was always shown as being torn in the exact same manner. I assumed that they were all drawn at one session where the model didn't change shirts. I felt that they could have gone through the extra trouble to show his shirt torn in different ways. At least now if I ever do re-read these, I'll start with a glance at the pulp mag covers first, and get a look at the real Doc with differently torn shirts.

Also, last month at WonderCon I found two of the Tops Comics published in 1944 by Consolidated Book Publishers, 153 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Illinois. Jim McMenamy, Editor. These were 2001 "Jack of Spades" and 2002 "Rip Raider" (not pictured in Gerber). I paid a ridiculous low price for these gems. I knew I had another one of this series at home which I purchased off a Dayton, Ohio dealer. I've discovered this is not listed in Overstreet. "Don't Bother to Dry Off" is #2004 and contains "gag" cartoons some in color and others tinted "red."

Finally, SuperCar (1961) was my favorite show when I was 6 years old. I can't believe I never saw this comic before. Wow!

Alan Glick, Florida

The high bidder just backed out?

Saw a quote about online auctions in your sister publication, the new Price Guide. It said "There are also some rather uncouth trading practices in use today, such as "sniping," in which a buyer sneaks onto an auction in the last seconds and puts in a final bid, and numerous instances of fraud being perpetrated on buyers who do not exercise caution."

First, I really dislike that fact that sniping and fraud are "linked" together by appearing in the same sentence, implying that sniping is illegal or immoral in some way. Sniping is perfectly legal on eBay, and many sellers actually encourage it (why wouldn't they?). And correct me if I am wrong, but doesn't the highest bid win the auction, regardless as to whether the bid is entered during the first minute of the auction or the last?

It's important to realize that bidding in the last few minutes actually saves you money. Do you know how many sellers out there have more than one ID? If you bid your maximum the first day of the auction, the seller's second name (called a "shill") is used to bid up your price until it nears your maximum. So, for example, instead of myself being the only bidder on an item and winning it for $10, the shill ID bids me up to just under my maximum of $20 and I end up paying $19 for an item I should have won for $10. If I bid in the last few minutes, this does not happen.

So what happens if the shill makes a mistake and outbids me, and subsequently wins the auction? Well, the seller e-mails me saying "Oh, the high bidder just backed out of the auction, and since you're the second highest bidder, I will offer it to you at the price you bid (my maximum)." If I accept I again would end up paying almost twice what I should have won the auction for.

So, bidding in the last seconds of an auction… Uncouth? Hardly. Smart? Definitely!

Stu Cathell, Washington

Mougin Mail

Here's some notes on CBM #77. My guesses on some Atlas covers: Barbarians #1 looks like Mike Sekowsky pencils, can't tell who inks; Brute #2: My guess is Rich Buckler/Pablo Marcos; Ironjaw #1, 2: Lots of Adams in there, would guess some folk in the Crusty Bunkers; Morlock #3: Rich Buckler pencils; Phoenix #1-2: Looks like Dick

Giordano to me; Targitt #1: Howard Chaykin?

As for letter queries: Supergirl and Zatanna teamed up in Supergirl #7 (1973) and the Superman and his daughter at Lois Lane's gravesite scene was on the cover of Superman #215. Hope this helps!

Lou Mougin, Texas

British Annuals

The article, "British Superboy Annuals," in the March issue of CBM was most informative. Being a "Legion of Super-Heroes" collector, I am consequently very much interested in acquiring Mint-condition copies of the 1959-60 and 1962-63 issues of Superboy Annual. Any additional help or advice Mr. Kealy could give would be greatly appreciated.

Admittedly, I am woefully ignorant of "Legion of Super-Heroes" appearances in overseas publications. Further information Mr. Kealy might have to offer would also be of immense value.

Thank you and please keep publishing articles about foreign collecting. Mr. Kealy's fan...

Steven J. Weill, California

Who was that Witching Hour #8 artist?

Hope things are well in California! Spring has been great in Toronto this year, very warm, little rain, although we did get some snow last week which only lasted a day or two. The Maple Leafs are in the playoffs, what could be better.

I was wondering if I could draw on your reader's experience? I recently purchased a page of original art from DC's Witching Hour #8. It was the last page of the book, great art featuring a beautiful girl and the Classic Urban Legend of the killer with the Hook. The art is uncredited. When I reviewed the other three stories in the book I found they were by Neal Adams, Nick Cardy, and Alex Toth—what a great line-up of talent. My page bears resemblance to both Adams work and Cardy work! On the top of the page in large print are the letters A and M. I'm wondering what the significance of these letters is? Could this indicate the names of the penciler and inker? The art was also drawn on the reverse of a blank DC cover page. Does anyone have an idea as to who this artist might be?

Any help you could provide would be greatly appreciated. Keep up the great work on CBM!

John Stuart, Canada

Great to see... R&B!

Just finished CBM #76. An entertaining issue, as always. If I wanted to nitpick, of course, I could point out the following stuff from the Rocky & Bullwinkle article:

1) Bullwinkle's supposed acting teacher was, film star Francis the Talking Mule, not Horse.

2) Although the checklist gives the correct dates for all the issues, both it and the article list/discuss them out of chronological order. Obviously, all of the Dell issues, including Mother Moose Nursery Pomes and Bullwinkle #10-090-209, came out before the Gold Key series Rocky & his Fiendish Friends.

3) Kuhl didn't specifically address the fact that all the stories in Rocky & his Fiendish Friends #5 were parodies of serious poetry, the same way Mother Moose's Nursery Pomes was of made up of parodies of children's nursery rhymes. Yes, the various characters crossed over into each other's strips, but that's not the true novelty of the issue. Actually, each issue of Fiendish Friends was based on a different theme: #1 on Boris and Natasha's homeland of Pottsylvania; #2 on Hollywood movies; #3 on sports; #4 on big business; and #5 on poetry. I suspect that a lot of the humor, especially in issue #5, went over the heads of most young readers, perhaps leading to the title's cancellation.

4) America's Best TV Comics was published in the summer of 1967, not 1969.

5) An addition to the checklist: Marvel reprinted several issues of its Bullwinkle series in a trade paperback titled Marvel Mooseterworks (no, I'm not kidding).

But I don't want to nitpick. It was great to see R&B get such coverage, including the cover. Boy, did that bring back memories!

Keep 'em flying,

Murray Ward, Canada

Tokyo Fans

Have enjoyed your magazine since about the sixth issue. The contents bring back memories of my youth when I lived in Arizona in the late '50s and early '60s. I used to race to the nearest drug store when the new comics arrived. Being the only DC fan at the time I could select all my favorite titles (Flash, GL, JLA, Atom—I was an Infantino/Kane fan). My brother and other classmates all fought to get their Marvel titles.

Moving to Japan first depressed me until I was able to find my favorites comics at an import bookstore. During college I was fortunate that my campus was next to the major distributor of comics in Japan. Each month myself and believe it or not there was a group of comic fans in Tokyo, would meet at the distributors warehouse and acquire comics before distribution to the various locations in Japan. The distributor would actually give us a (I recall) 15% discount. They were happy that we would buy over a hundred comics.

After college my collecting days were over but several years later searching for good investments I came across the Overstreet Price Guide. It's true that I now invest more than collect comics now. But I am glad a magazine such as CBM exists for people who love comics.

Satoshi Hirota, Japan

Savvy collector

Thanks to the CBM, I truly am a more educated, savvy, comic book collector, with an extensively longer want list than ever before in my whole entire life and it grows each issue.

Rick Davidson, California

My thanks to everyone who wrote in this time, I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family" now, and your opinion counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Strange Case of All American Western #12

(Continued from page 4)

ly freeze motion and put the reader in the heart of the action.

We loved 'em... we wanted 'em... and we went after those 27 issues (#100-126) with a vengeance!

Over the course of a few years we eventually found them all... *except* #125! Where was it? Why couldn't we find it? What made this one issue of *All American Western* so darn hard to find?

After years of mystery, the answer to these questions were finally revealed to us in the summer of 1967. While leafing through a catalog that had just arrived in the mail, I spied among the plethora of comic books for sale a VG copy of "*All American Western* #12." I recall staring at the ad incredulously, looking at the number over and over to confirm what my eyes were seeing... but my mind would not believe.

Huh? #12? There ain't no #12!

"Hey Laaaaaa-aaaaaane" I urgently shouted for my brother. "Check this out... this guy's selling a book that doesn't exist." Yep... it was listed for sale all right... an impossible copy of *All American Western* #12.

After 30 seconds of heated discussion, I hastily wrote a letter, addressed and stamped an envelope, and hightailed to the post office for a money order as fast as my bicycle could get me there. Several weeks later a package arrived.

Holding our breath in a half hopeful-half skeptical gulp, we opened it. There it was in all its glory... a Toth *All American Western* cover we'd never seen before... and up in the left hand corner was (gasp) "NO.12"!!!!!

Turning to the indicia, the truth became instantly clear. This was a copy of the long lost #125, yet there was a one-numeral mistake on the cover! It turns out that instead of a "125" the printer inadvertently dropped the "5" so that the cover says "APR. MAY, NO.12"

Such a tiny thing to rest of the world, yet I felt our discovery was at least on par with the location of Atlantis. This was the excitement of collecting and research that made all those hours of reading, calling, searching used book stores, and looking through fanzine ads and catalogs worthwhile. This was the joy of discovery in its purest and most concentrated form. This is what comic book collecting was all about and it felt so good to place that issue in the stack, secure in the knowledge that finally, against all odds, we had them all... including the 125!

As the years went by, I eventually met Ernie Gerber and he told me about his *Photo-Journal* project. He even came over to take pictures of a few books. But I never got the chance to tell him about the weirdness of *All American Western* #125. When the two volumes were finally published, I noted the white space on page 47 in Volume I... a white space caused by an incredibly small printer's mistake with a single tiny numeral. This error, printed in 1952, wouldn't be noticed by collectors until 1967... wouldn't be reported to the *Price Guide* until 1975... wouldn't be brought to the attention of fandom (via a Gerber white space) until 1980... and wouldn't be discussed in a fanzine until 2000... almost half a century after the event!

So I guess the lesson here for collectors is never give up... and never quit searching... no matter how slim the odds against finding a book seem. Who knows? One day the mailman may show up at the front door with your *All American Western* #12!

Thanks for reading, and may you fill the esoteric holes on your want list!

Best,

Gary

Gary M. Carter

ALL-AMERICAN WESTERN, No. 125. April-May, 1952. Published bi-monthly by National Comics Publications, Inc., 480 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N. Y. Whitney Ellsworth, Editor. Entered as second class matter Sept. 23, 1948 at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription in the U. S. 75c including postage. Foreign, $1.50 in American funds. Entire contents copyrighted 1952 by National Comics Publications, Inc. For advertising rates address Richard A. Feldon & Co., 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y. Except those who have authorized use of their names, the stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this periodical are entirely imaginary and fictitious, and no identification with actual persons, living or dead is intended or should be inferred.

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Although no rarer than any other **All American Western** from 1952, issue #125 (Apr/May 1952) is in higher demand because it is one of the white-spaces missing from Vol. I of Gerber's **Photo-Journal**. The **Guide** (#30) presently lists this book at $19 in GD, $57 in FN, and $130 in NM

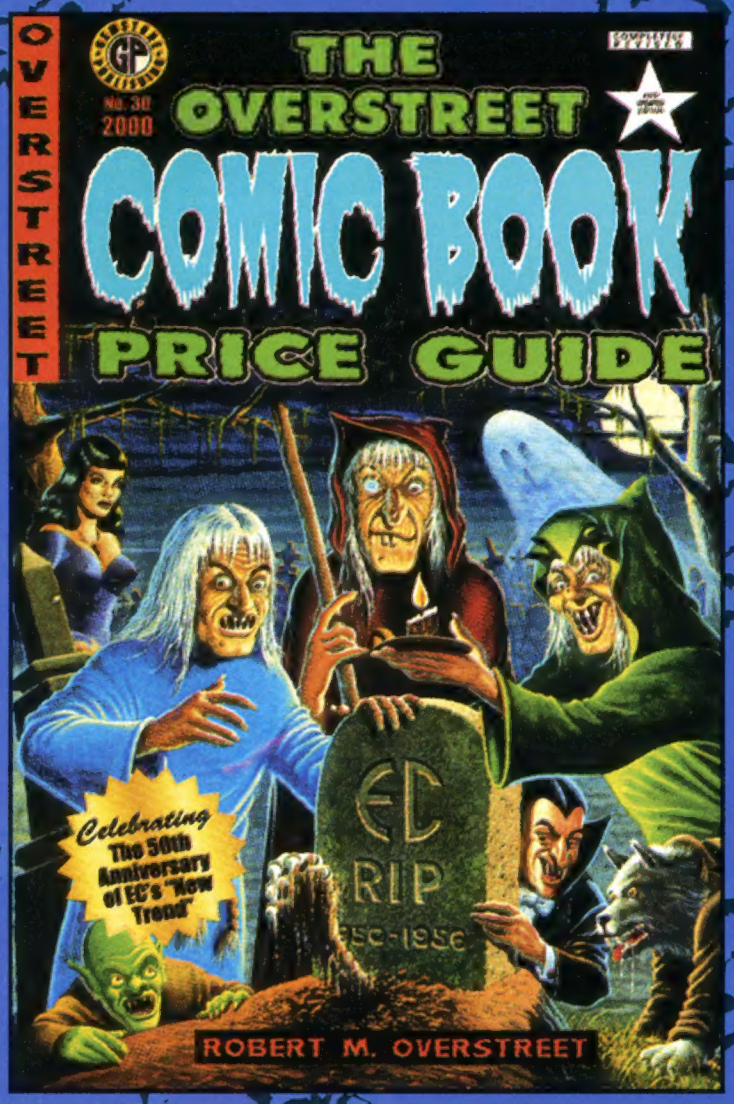
FACING PAGE:
The indicia from "**All American Western NO.12**" proving that the legendary DC western is really issue #125

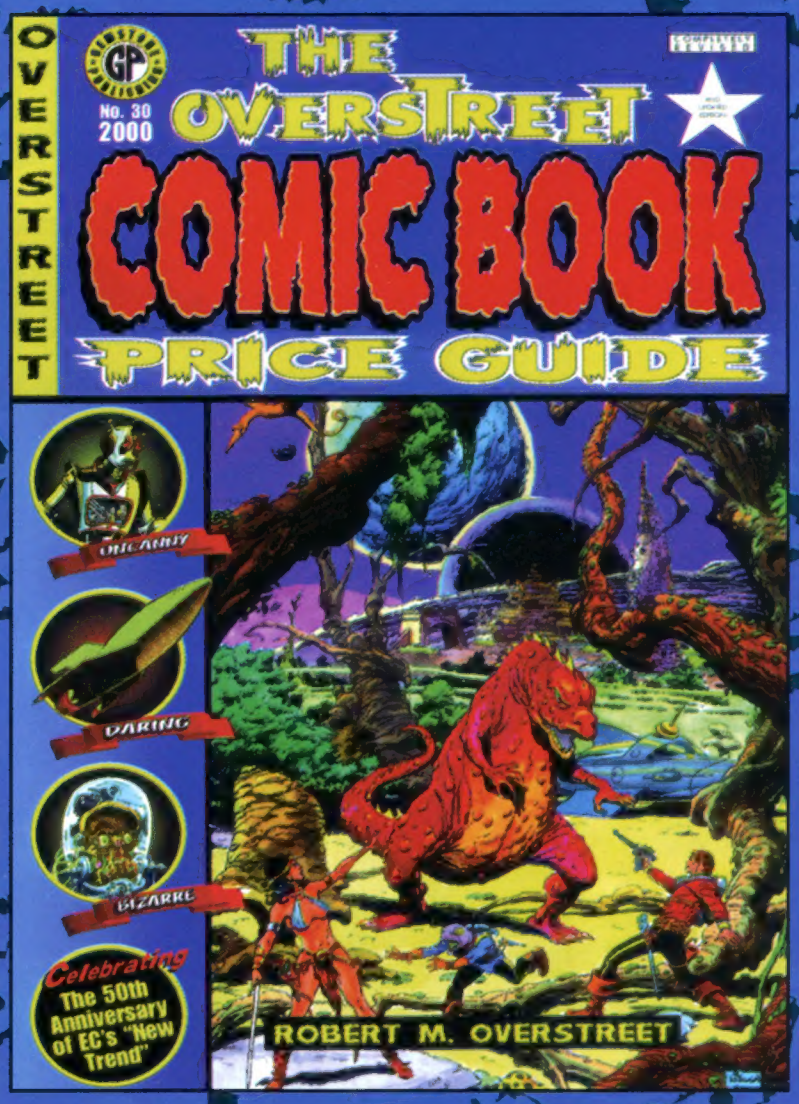
A THRILLING "FOLEY of the FIGHTING FIFTH" ADVENTURE
SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
APR. MAY
NO.12
ALL AMERICAN
Western
10¢
WE'VE BEEN WAITIN' FOR THIS, THUNDER! YOU'RE A PERFECT TARGET! HAW HAW!
SIZZLING BULLETS PURSUE Johnny Thunder IN A GRIM GAME OF DEATH!

© 2000 DC

Confusing collectors for years and causing a Gerber white-space... the misprinted cover of **All American Western** #125 clearly shows "NO.12"

DOUBLE TAKE!





Characters ©2000 William M. Gaines, Agent, Inc.

Did you know there were two covers for this book? EC greats **Al Williamson** and **Al Feldstein**, two comics legends, celebrate the 50th anniversary of EC's "New Trend" titles and the 30th anniversary of **The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide**! You can find them both at your local comic book shop in March!

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